

A Companion to Medieval and Early Modern Confraternities

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A Companion to Medieval and Early Modern Confraternities

Edited by

Konrad Eisenbichler



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This book is printed on acid-free paper and produced in a sustainable manner.

To Ludovica Sebregondi,
who has been a companion and a guide
to me and many others
on our confraternities journeys,
with thanks.



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Introduction: A World of Confraternities

Konrad Eisenbichler

1 Introduction

After the State and the Church, the most well-organised membership system of medieval and early modern Europe was the confraternity—an association of lay persons who gathered regularly to pray and carry out a charitable activity. In cities, towns, and villages it would have been difficult for someone not to be a member of a confraternity, a benefactor of a confraternity's charitable work, or, at the very least, not to be aware of a confraternity's presence in the community. From regular devotional rituals to social and economic protocols, confraternities regulated both the spiritual and personal life of their members. They also provided the wider community with spiritual, social, and economic assistance in times of need and throughout the regular course of the year. As a result, confraternities became important venues not only for the acquisition and distribution of social capital, but also wealth, be that spiritual or material. Because of this, they were often seen as a potential threat to the power of the State and the Church, both of which sought on many occasions to bring them under their control and, in so doing, remove them from the competition. The Church finally succeeded in the mid-16th century with the edicts of the Council of Trent (1545–63) that finally brought confraternities fully under its jurisdiction. The State, on the other hand, dealt with perceived threat from confraternities by suppressing them, that is, closing them down. In the late 18th and early 19th centuries various European states issued legislations that closed down many lay religious associations and confiscated their wealth. Whether placed under the jurisdiction of the Church or closed down by the State, the results for confraternities were profound. While it is difficult to determine a significant change from medieval to early-modern confraternities, the change between pre-Tridentine and post-Tridentine confraternities is quite noticeable, as Danilo Zardin, for example, points out in his article on Eucharistic devotion in Lombardy. The changes that affected confraternities in the wake of late 18th and 19th-century suppressions by the state are also dramatic, but fall outside the chronological time-frame of this volume; suffice it to say, that much if not most of the confraternities' charitable work in the community was taken over by the state and confraternities became, by and large, purely devotional associations.

In spite of their long history and close relations with the social community, in the 19th and for most of the 20th century confraternities became invisible history. Until recently, scholarship ignored the contributions made by lay religious associations to the fabric of religion and society. This has now changed. In the past thirty years there has been a veritable explosion of innovative studies on medieval and early modern lay religious organisations.¹ Much of this exciting new research on confraternities has been locally focused and aimed at a local public, but much has also been international and interdisciplinary. Such interest comes as a welcomed change after two centuries of negative assessments and scholarly disregard.

The earliest scholarly attempts to examine confraternities as a whole came from and focused on Italy. The rich archives and libraries to be found throughout the peninsula and the exceptional quantity of artistic, literary, and musical works composed for confraternal use ensured that Italy would be a primary focus of attention for anyone interested in lay religious organisations. This is still true, as the various articles on Italian confraternities present in this collection can attest, though much is now starting to be done on confraternities in France, the Iberian peninsula, eastern Europe, and the British Isles.

The first scholar to carry out a comprehensive study of the confraternal phenomenon was the Modenese erudite Ludovico Antonio Muratori (1672–1750), who published a historical overview of the origins and development of confraternities in Italy. His essay “De piis laicorum confraternitatibus, earumque origine, flagellantibus, et sacris missionibus” (1742)² set the tone for future works, which was not necessarily a good thing ... As might be expected from a leading exponent of the Enlightenment, Muratori described confraternities as medieval associations ripe with abuses and much in need of reformation. His views were soon echoed and amplified by the Florentine abbot and *savant* Lorenzo Mehus (1717–1802) who, in his *Dell'origine, progresso, abusi, e riforma delle confraternite laicali* (Florence: 1785), declaimed all sorts of abuses (real and imagined)

1 For a survey of Italian scholarship on medieval and early modern confraternities, see Konrad Eisenbichler, “Italian Scholarship on Pre-Modern Confraternities in Italy,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 50 (1997): 567–580. For a bibliography of salient recent scholarship on confraternities in Europe and the Americas see Nicholas Terpstra’s *Confraternities* in the “Oxford Bibliographies” (New York: 2012), online at <http://www.oxfordbibliographies.com>. See also the rubric “Publications Received” in the biannual journal *Confraternitas*, available online as a single PDF document at <https://www.crrs.ca/Confraternitas/collect.htm>.

2 Ludovico Antonio Muratori, *Antiquitates italicæ mediæ ævi, sive dissertationes*. 6 vols (Milan: 1738–42; rpt. Bologna: 1965), dissertation 75, “De piis laicorum confraternitatibus, earumque origine, flagellantibus, et sacris missionibus,” vol. 6 (1742), cols. 449–482; soon translated into Italian as “Delle pie Confraternità de” Laici, e dell’origine d’esse, de” Flagellanti, e delle sacre Missioni” in *Dissertazioni sopra le antichità italiane*. 3 vols (Milan: 1751), 3:592–607.

and then praised Grand Duke Peter Leopold of Tuscany for his “enlightened” suppression of all these “decayed” associations.³ Muratori’s and Mehus’s negative attitude towards confraternities influenced the entire 19th century and resulted in general scholarly silence on the topic. After a century and a half of total scholarly neglect, the history of the confraternal movement finally attracted the attention of a more favourably inclined historian, the Neapolitan scholar Gennaro Maria Monti (1896–1943), who, with his two-volume *Le confraternite medievali nell’alta e media Italia* (Venice: 1927), was the first to carry out a systematic examination of confraternities in northern and central Italy (with, in the appendices, about ten pages on Neapolitan and Sicilian confraternities and just over twenty pages on confraternities in France). Not only did Monti point out the remarkable spread (both numerical and geographical) of lay religious associations, but he also underlined the antiquity of these associations and their longevity, thereby giving them historical validity. Though a fairly superficial survey, and not free from some serious errors, Monti’s work remained the authoritative text for fifty years, that is, until the Belgian scholar Gilles Gerard Meersseman, O.P., (1903–1988) published his collected articles on medieval and early modern confraternities associated with the Dominican order in his three-volume set *Ordo fraternitatis* (Rome: 1977). Meersseman’s work immediately became the standard to be emulated because of his precise scholarly methodology, his firm reliance on archival research and documentation, and his keen awareness of the problem of terminology.

2 What is a Confraternity?

Terminology is, in fact, a serious problem. In his contribution to this volume Paul Trio points out the difficulties inherent in trying to define what a confraternity is.

One aspect of the problem is strictly linguistic: there are a lot of different terms used to refer to a lay religious organisation. Until now, I have used the generic term “confraternity,” which is the direct translation of the Latin *confraternitas* and which, as such, reappears in other languages as *confrérie* (Fr.),

3 Peter Leopold suppressed all confraternities with a unilateral decree (*motu proprio*) issued on 21 March 1785; see Konrad Eisenbichler, “The Suppression of Confraternities in Enlightenment Florence” in *The Politics of Ritual Kinship. Confraternities and Social Order in Early Modern Italy*, (ed.) Nicholas Terpstra (Cambridge: 2000), 262–278. For a detailed examination of how this suppression was actually carried out on one particular confraternity, see Konrad Eisenbichler, *The Boys of the Archangel Raphael: A Youth Confraternity in Florence, 1411–1785* (Toronto: 1998), 292–306.

confraternita (Ital.), *cofradia* (Sp.), *confraria* (Port.). There is also the variant “fraternity,” which reappears as *frairie* (Fr.), *fraternita* (Ital.), *fraternidad* (Sp.), *fraternidade* (Port.), *fraternität* (Germ.), as well as in the variants *hermandad* (Sp.), *irmandade* (Port.), *Bruderschaft* (Germ.), *broederschap* (Dutch), *brat-erstwo* (Pol.)—all terms that allude to the “brotherhood” established through membership in the organisation. To complicate matters, Latin also used the term *sodalitas* (Lat.) which gave us “sodality” and its variants *sodalité* (Fr.), *sodalizio* (Ital.), *sodaliteit* (Dutch), *sodalität* (Germ.). At the same time, there are also idiosyncratic local terms that have nothing to do with the concept of brotherhood or solidarity—terms such as *charité* or *carité* (Normandy), *compagnia* (Florence), *scuola* (Venice), or *casaccia* (Genoa). In short, the terminology used to describe these religious organisations is both rich and varied.

The more difficult terminological problem, however, comes from the word “guild” and its related terms “company” and “corporation” that are also sometime used to describe these organisations. These terms generally lead people to think of trade or craft guilds, such as those that gathered merchants, bankers, traders, and artisans, and this is correct. However, one must not forget that some of these guilds and corporations were first established as religious associations (confraternities) of lay persons engaged in the same trade who gathered under the auspices of a patron saint in order both to pray and regulate their craft. The devotional component of a guild’s origins and life should thus not be ignored. There are many examples of professional guilds that doubled as confraternities—one might think of the many guilds of St Luke that gathered painters and other artists, especially in the Netherlands (in Antwerp, Bruges, Bruxelles, Delft, Haarlem, Leiden, Mechelen, Tournai, Utrecht), but also in Italy (Florence, Venice), France (Paris), and elsewhere; or the drapers’ guild in London, which was one and the same with the confraternity of the Virgin Mary in the church of St Mary Bethlehem in Bishopsgate; or the Brotherhood of St Mark (*Marxbrüder*), which was the most important association of sword makers in Germany; or the bakers’ guild of St Anne in Dublin, and so forth. The examples are myriad.

There are also interesting variants on this doubling. Some confraternities, for example, functioned as lending institutions. In Turin, the Compagnia di San Paolo, founded as a confraternity in 1563, soon developed a sideline as a public lending institution (1579); in 1653 it assumed administration of the public debt; then, after a brief Napoleonic suppression, it returned to serve the poor of Turin by once again providing, among other things, low-interest loans; in 1853 the company was split into two—a “Compagnia di San Paolo” that functioned as a confraternity dedicated only to religious devotion and a secular “Istituto San Paolo” that managed the organisation’s patrimony and charitable

activities; finally, in 1950, the Istituto was restructured as a bona fide bank and renamed the Istituto Bancario San Paolo, soon to become one of the major banking conglomerates in Europe.⁴

In England, some confraternities that doubled as guilds could, at times, also double as governments. Already some years ago Alexandra F. Johnston mentioned that “the Guild of St. John of Beverley was the confraternal wing of the guild merchant of Beverley that, in the fullness of time, became the municipal government.”⁵ After pointing out numerous other such cases in England, she ended her article saying that:

After the Dissolution [1547] in York the properties and obligations of the confraternities were simply absorbed by the city council. In Abingdon, the confraternity itself became the corporation. Variations on these two basic patterns can be found all over the kingdom. In trying to understand the nature of English society in this period of radical administrative change, we ignore the place of the confraternities to our peril.⁶

The situation in England may, in fact, have parallels on continental Europe. One should not forget that in republican Florence a man had to be a member of a guild before he could vote or be elected to a government body. More work is clearly needed to identify other places and situations where lay religious associations or religious guilds doubled as a town's government. Alongside the religious and business side of confraternities, there was also the ethnic side. Expatriates living in a foreign country occasionally gathered into “national” confraternities where they could maintain a sense of identity and a connection with their homeland by worshipping their traditional saints in their traditional manner, using and maintaining their own language, and being with people from their own region. These national confraternities also helped newcomers integrate more easily into the new community and, eventually, to advance in it. Such is the case with the many national confraternities of Albanians, Florentines, French, Genoese, Germans, Illyrians, Slavs, and others that one finds in multicultural centres of immigration such as Rome, Venice, Paris, London, but also in smaller centres that experienced an influx of immigrants such as town on the eastern shores of central Italy (Ancona, Ascoli Piceno,

4 On the Compagnia di San Paolo, see Walter E. Crivellin, and Bruno Signorelli (eds.), *Per una storia della Compagnia di San Paolo (1563–1853)*. 3 vols Quaderni dell'Archivio storico (Turin: 2004, 2005, 2007) as well as the other publications of the Compagnia di San Paolo.

5 Alexandra F. Johnston, “English Guilds and Municipal Authority,” *Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance et Réforme* 25.1 (1989), 69–88: 70.

6 Johnston, “English Guilds and Municipal Authority,” 85–86.

Loreto, Pesaro, Recanati) that welcomed significant numbers of immigrants from the eastern Adriatic or towns in the subalpine area (Bergamo, Udine) that welcomed immigrants from north of the Alps.⁷ To complicate matters, some of these national confraternities doubled as trade guilds, as we see with the *Scola dei calegheri tedeschi*, the German shoemakers' guild founded in 1298 in Venice under the protection of St Anianus of Alexandria. German shoemakers gathered into confraternities in Florence, Lucca, Pisa, Siena, and Rome, while German bakers did the same in Venice, Rome, and Siena, German pressmen in Venice, German weavers in Florence, and so forth.⁸

Not only craft guilds, but literary organisations could also fall under the "confraternity" rubric. In the Netherlands, the chambers of rhetoric (*rederijkerskamer*) that organised literary competitions and theatrical performances can be grouped with, and considered alongside confraternities; similarly, there were confraternities in northern France whose *raison d'être* was to organise poetry competitions (*puy*s), once again blending the devotional and literary lives of their members.⁹ Just to complicate things a little further, the painters' guild of St Luke, in Antwerp, was so closely associated with the *Violieren* chamber of rhetoric that they are often discussed together. Walter S. Gibson points out that "The *Violieren*, in fact, had been closely associated with the Antwerp artists' guild [of St Luke] since 1480, and by Bruegel's day, it seems to have been composed almost entirely of artists."¹⁰ The link between religious confraternities and literary production are very strong, ranging from the performance of plays by and within confraternities to the recitation of learned sermons composed by humanists. Nerida Newbiggin has pointed out that "for many *confratelli* in late medieval and early modern Europe, plays and performance were an intrinsic part of confraternal life and, for some at least, the most important part."¹¹ Similarly, Christopher Black noted that "humanist sermons to Florentine confraternities can be judged as literary contributions to an academy or as stimuli

7 On the latter, see *Schiavoni / Illyrian Confraternities in Italy*, special issue of *Confraternitas* 27.1–2 (2016). For national confraternities in Rome, see the article by Anna Esposito in this volume.

8 Alfred Doren, *Deutsche Handwerker und Handwerkenbruderschaften in mittelälterlichen Italien* (Berlin: 1903).

9 For both the Netherlandish and French cases, see the respective articles by Anne-Laure Van Bruaene and Dylan Reid in this collection.

10 Walter S. Gibson, "Artists and Rederijkers in the Age of Bruegel." *The Art Bulletin* 63.3 (1981): 426–446: 431 n. 37.

11 Nerida Newbiggin, "Docere Delectando: Confraternal Drama Studies and the Academy," in *Early Modern Confraternities in Europe and the Americas: International and Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, (eds.) Christopher Black and Pamela Gravestock (Aldershot, UK: 2006), 226–242: 226.

to an elite religious group.”¹² In short, the relationship between confraternities and the rise of national literatures is very close, but little studied.

3 Recent Scholarship

Things, however, are changing. Since the late 1980s, there has been a steady growth in scholarly interest in late medieval and early modern confraternities. Some of this interest has been locally sponsored and focused, often spearheaded by a local figure and supported by a *pro loco* organisation or research centre—one thinks of the extensive work on confraternities carried out by the Centro di documentazione sul movimento dei disciplinati (f. 1963 in Perugia), or the Centro Ricerche Storia Religiosa in Puglia (f. 1986 in Bari). These local scholars, with ready access to their town’s archives, libraries, and institutions, have been able to bring to light and into circulation a wealth of information and materials—textual records from local church and state archives, visual records from extant and suppressed confraternities. Some of the new scholarship has also come from foreign scholars who have brought an international perspective and an interdisciplinary approach to the research, leading to a virtual explosion of innovative methodologies and new insights—one thinks of the many sessions organised by the Society for Confraternity Studies at the annual meetings of the Renaissance Society of America and of the Sixteenth Century Society and Conference that regularly bring together scholars from across Europe, North America, and Australia to present their current research and advance the state of the discipline.

Much of the local interest has been fanned by a strong interest in the history and traditions of the region and a desire to bring them to light and validate them in the context of a wider community of scholarship. Much of the international interest has come, instead, from specialists in a field, such as social historians interested in the contributions confraternities made to the wider community through the establishment and management of hospitals, hospices, orphanages, poverty relief, dowries, and other charitable endeavours. Art historians, for their part, have looked at confraternities in their search for provenance, commissions, commissioners, and artists or when assessing a work’s original purpose/impact. Historians of literature have re-examined and re-evaluated texts originally composed for/by confraternity use (poetry, plays, sermons) by setting them firmly in the context for which they were created.

12 Christopher F. Black, *Italian Confraternities in the Sixteenth Century* (Cambridge, UK: 1989), 91.

Music historians have looked at the role of confraternities in the development of new musical genres (the madrigal, musical theatre, and the oratorio in particular). The research of all these scholars has led to important, and at times even prize-winning monographs, not to mention a growing number of discipline-specific articles that have made significant contributions to their field. It has also led to the organisation of international conferences on either side of the Atlantic as well as to the publication of conference proceedings and essay collections, and, not to forget, the creation of a Society for Confraternity Studies (f. 1989) and a scholarly journal, *Confraternitas* (f. 1990).

4 The Current Volume

The current volume is part of this growing interest in medieval and early modern confraternities. It is very much in line with a number of successful essays collections that have appeared since the late 1980s on both sides of the Atlantic,¹³ but is also somewhat different from them. What distinguishes it from its predecessors is its attempt at a comprehensive approach to confraternities (history, religion, literature, art, music) in a larger geographical area (from Ireland to Italy, from Spain to Poland, from Europe to Central and South America). In so doing, it seeks to examine confraternal devotion, charity, and the arts in a more global context. Having said this, there still is a lot of local history in this volume and there clearly still remain large lacunae to be filled, especially in the areas of confraternities in Africa or in Asia and of non-Christian confraternities. Similarly, while some traditional areas of interest are presented in this volume (such as the contributions of confraternities to the community through their charitable work or their commissioning of literary, artistic, and musical works), other, newer areas of interest are yet to be fully examined, especially gender, race, or age (topics that appear in a number of articles in this volume, but merit studies on their own). Women, for example, appear in more than half of the articles in this volume as confraternity members or recipients of confraternal charity and figure prominently in Federica Francesconi's contribution, but we do not have an article specifically on their participation in confraternities (or a book, for that matter). Race is a factor in both Christopher Black's article on the Inquisition and even more so in Murdo MacLeod's article on Latin American confraternities, not to mention in Francesconi's article on Jewish confraternities, but again there is no specific study on race and confraternities. Francesconi devotes an entire subsection of her

13 See the list of suggested further readings at the end of this introduction.

article to youths and Nerida Newbiggin mentions them often in her discussion of theatre in confraternities, as do, to a lesser extent, Jonathan Glixon and Alys-sa Abraham in their discussions of music and art, respectively, and there have been some book-length studies on them,¹⁴ but clearly a lot more could be said (and investigated) about the contribution of young men and women, often in their teens, to lay religious associations and, by extension, to their community. There is also much to be said about the contribution of confraternities to the local economy (and not only as trade guilds, but also as religious institutions). And then one could examine confraternities in the light of recent new scholarship on urban space and the senses (sight, hearing, smell), especially to consider the social dynamics when a flagellant confraternity took to the streets in a penitential procession, or when a youth confraternity sang *laude* on its way to/from a pilgrimage site, or when confraternities mounted plays in public squares and intersections (some of these are discussed in the contributions by Nicholas Terpstra on comforting confraternities, Zardin on Eucharistic devotion, Newbiggin on theatre, and, of course, Glixon on music). In short, there are clearly a variety of ways to skin the confraternal cat and plenty of topics that could and should be considered. The field is simply too vast. So, given the inevitable limits and restrictions any compendium must operate within, in the end this volume will be happy if it has not only highlighted current and future approaches to confraternities, but also pointed to some of the lacunae to be filled by the next generation of scholars.

The articles that constitute this collection discuss various aspects of the confraternal movement across Europe and Latin America and offer a sampling of recent scholarship on various fundamental aspects of confraternities. While acknowledging its limits, this volume does, nonetheless, present a panoramic view of the field. In the same way, it gathers scholars from all the major humanistic disciplines—history, religion, literature, art, and music—to showcase a variety of scholarly approaches. Lastly, this volume is carefully laid out in five different sections that touch on the most important elements of confraternal life—their establishment and growth, their spiritual and devotional life, their charitable work for society, their place in the transcultural world of the time, and their contributions to the arts and letters.

The volume opens with a sampling of the development of confraternities in three different cultural areas of Europe—Flanders, Ticino, and Poland—three

14 Eisenbichler, *The Boys of the Archangel Raphael: A Youth Confraternity in Florence, 1411–1785*; Taddei, Ilaria, *Fanciulli e giovani: crescere a Firenze nel Rinascimento* (Florence: 2001); Lorenzo Polizzotto, *Children of the Promise: The Confraternity of the Purification and the Socialization of Youths in Florence, 1427–1785* (Oxford: 2004).

areas that can be used to reflect the three major linguistic and cultural groups of the continent: Germanic, Latin, and Slavic. Paul Trio opens our discussion with some considerations on terminology, pointing out the difficulties to be encountered in trying to distinguish between confraternities and different kinds of corporations commonly called guilds. Conscious, but not undeterred by the problem, Trio takes Flanders as his case study and surveys the birth and development of these organisations in the region. Confraternities were the first to appear, in the High Middle Ages, generally associated with Benedictine monasteries, where they evolved from earlier prayer associations of laymen and religious. Then, in the 11th century, as the area becomes ever more urbanised, we see the appearance of merchant and trade guilds. They are followed by archers' guilds in the 14th century and finally by the guilds of rhetoricians in the second half of the 15th century. The survey reveals that these corporations, with their diverse religious, economic, military, or socio-cultural functions, essentially displayed the characteristics of a confraternity, hence the terminological problems inherent in trying to distinguish between them. For the Latin side of Europe, Davide Adamoli examines the development of confraternities in the Ticino, the Italian-speaking canton of Switzerland. Focusing on religious associations devoted to the Eucharist, he surveys their origins in pre-Tridentine Catholicism and then their proliferation in the years after the Council of Trent. In so doing he underlines the flexibility that allowed these associations to adapt to post-Tridentine priorities and even serve as conduits for the extension of Tridentine ideals and art north of the Alps. Beata Wojciechowska takes us into the Slavic world of central Europe with her survey of confraternities in Bohemia, Poland, and the Teutonic State. She points out their extensive presence on the territory and their active contributions not only to the devotional life of the population, but also to the social and artistic life of the community. Similar overviews of the birth and development of confraternities in various cultural/linguistics areas of Europe still need to be carried out, especially in languages that are easily accessible to the wider academic community, and not just to the local/national community.¹⁵

The second section in this volume looks at the primary reason for the existence of lay religious associations—devotion. This is an area that, so far, has attracted relatively little attention from scholars and so remains open for much further investigation, especially since it might provide new insights into pre-modern lay religious practices and spirituality.¹⁶ We need to remember that

15 Christopher F. Black's *Italian Confraternities in the Sixteenth Century* is a unique case in this respect, very much to be emulated for other regions of Europe.

16 For an insight into the devotional practices of one confraternity, see Eisenbichler, *The Boys of the Archangel Raphael*, 138–190.

the desire to pray in community was the primary (or, at least, the official) motivation that drew lay people into confraternities. That desire was grounded on the awareness that to be a good Christian one must reform oneself and adhere to a stricter code of moral conduct.

In the first article in this section, Gervase Rosser points out that while much work has been devoted to describing the organisation and activities of medieval guilds and confraternities, less attention has been paid to the underlying ethical purpose behind their formation. This is unfortunate since, as he points out, “The *raison d’être* of the medieval confraternities was ethical [...] infusing them all was a language of moral reform that was simultaneously addressed to the singular participant, to the body of the members, and to society at large” (p. 91). The rhetoric of these predominantly lay societies voiced a perceived need for men and women, in the mutually supportive context of the confraternity, to assume responsibility both for their personal growth as ethical individuals and for public issues affecting the community. A conventional and external adherence to the institutional requirements of the Christian Church was not enough to bring anyone to the perfection of which human nature was capable.

From the general ethics of personal and community moral reform, we move to a case study of a devotional practice—Eucharistic piety. Here, Danilo Zardin points out how, already in the late 15th century, Eucharistic piety began to spread in Italian devotional circles, bringing about a flowering of new models of confraternal solidarity and an integration of previously existing models. The growth, both in number and in prestige, of confraternities dedicated to the Body of Christ present in the Eucharist was one of the most effective means the Catholic Church had at its disposal in reaffirming the validity of its Eucharistic theology, especially in the wake of Protestant denials. It was also a way to engage the faithful in its post-Tridentine program of reaffirmation and reform.

A third way in which confraternities supported and helped to advance Christian (in this case, Catholic) ideals was to assist in the struggle against heresy. As Christopher F. Black points out, some confraternities were early and strong supporters of one of the Church’s most (in)famous offices—the Inquisition. Following Peter Martyr’s lead, and often taking him as their patron saint, some of the faithful gathered into sodalities specifically founded to combat heresy and support the Church in its struggle against heterodoxy, especially in Spain and Italy.

In line with these articles, future scholars may well look across other geographical landscapes at the important, but often neglected role confraternities played in fostering personal moral reform, pietistic devotion, and adherence to Church teachings. They might, for example, want to consider more fully the

raison d'être and devotional practices not only of confraternities dedicated to the (re)affirmation of Catholic Eucharist theology, but also to the (re)affirmation of the intercessory power of saints—in particular at the growing number of confraternities devoted to the Virgin Mary in her various aspects or at the growth, in the wake of natural disasters, of the cult of particular saints, such as St Sebastian as a protector from the plague.

In line with Catholic theology whereby salvation is attained by both faith and good works, confraternities put their beliefs into practice by carrying out one of the seven Works of Mercy or by engaging in some other activity that benefitted the wider community. They ran hospitals for the sick, hospices for pilgrims and the destitute, they worked to release prisoners (including Christians who had been captured and enslaved by Muslims), they endowed poor young women who would otherwise not be able to marry, they supported the education of young men, they maintained altars, chapels, or even churches. In short, they were fully engaged in the community where they lived. The third section of our collection thus offers some examples of the good works carried out by confraternities.

Marina Gazzini opens the discussion by offering a case study on how confraternities could serve to educate their members not only in Christian doctrine, but also in professional ethics and morality. By focusing on the sermons the 13th-century lawyer Albertano da Brescia delivered to his colleagues in the guild of lawyers and notaries, Gazzini shows how laymen sought to improve the morality of their colleagues and of society at large by teaching professional ethics and fostering communal peace.

There is still much work to be done on the sermons that were composed and delivered by the laity in confraternities, especially in light of the religious and social reform movements of the time. Some of these were composed by highly educated individuals such as Albertano da Brescia, but many were not—while the former can provide insights into the learned and humanist understanding of morality and religion, the latter can tell us much about popular piety and the common person's understanding of the Christian faith. More than thirty years ago Paul Oskar Kristeller noted that "the practice of preaching in the Compagnie is mentioned so frequently in the statutes, and this kind of literature is so likely not to be recorded or else to escape scholarly attention that its known specimens must be considered as a rather small selection from a much larger volume of sermons actually composed and delivered."¹⁷ In fact, few confraternity sermons have been edited and published; among them, in the Italian context, we have four sermons by the humanist Agnolo Poliziano,

17 Kristeller, *Studies in Renaissance Thought and Letters* (1984), 103.

four by the intellectual Giovanni Nesi, one by Niccolò Machiavelli, and ten by the dramatist Giovan Maria Cecchi.¹⁸

David D'Andrea moves the discussion on Good Works into a more tangible sphere by illustrating the fundamental role played by lay religious associations in providing for the infirm and destitute through the establishment and management of hospitals and hospices. In so doing, he points out that one cannot fully understand our modern welfare system without appreciating the historical formation, development, and reform of confraternities and their charitable enterprises (p. 176). He is followed by Colm Lennon who outlines the close supportive relationship between Irish confraternities and parishes in the English Pale. As Irish confraternities became richer and stronger, they contributed generously to the parish, even providing purpose-built accommodations for chaplains who served chapels and side altars in parish churches. Nicholas Terpstra brings this subsection to close with his analysis of a very special type of institution, the "comforting confraternity" that provided spiritual and psychological support to the condemned in their final hours before execution. The *conforteria*, or ritual of comforting, helped the condemned make a "good death" by calmly accepting both their inevitable fate and by generously forgiving the system, or community, that was taking their life. A charitable work of crucial importance, the *conforteria* has drawn a good amount of scholarly interest in recent years not only from social historians, but also from historians of theatre who have seen, in a number of martyrdom plays, close connections with the rituals and practices of comforting confraternities.¹⁹

18 Poliziano's four sermons have been published most recently in Giovannangiola Tarugi, "Scritti religiosi di Angelo Poliziano," in *Il pensiero italiano del Rinascimento e il tempo nostro. Atti del V Convegno Internazionale del Centro di Studi Umanistici, Montepulciano, 8–13 agosto 1968* (Florence: 1970), 43–108. For Nesi's sermons see Olga Zorzi Pugliese, "Two Sermons by Giovanni Nesi and the Language of Spirituality in Late Fifteenth-Century Florence," *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 42 (1980), 641–656. For Machiavelli's parody of a confraternity sermon, see Olga Zorzi Pugliese, "Machiavelli and Confraternities: A Sermon to the Brethren and a Parody of Their Statutes," *Confraternitas* 19.2 (2008) 3–10. For the sermons composed by the notary Giovan Maria Cecchi see his *Ragionamenti spirituali*, 1558, (ed.) Konrad Eisenbichler (Ottawa: 1986). For a discussion of sermons in confraternities see Eisenbichler, *The Boys of the Archangel Raphael*, 180–190. There is rudimentary list of sermons recited by laymen in Florentine confraternities in Angelo Maria Bandini, *Specimen litteraturae florentinae saeculi xv*, 2 vols (Florence: 1748, 1751), 2:160–163.

19 See, for example, Kathleen Falvey, "Early Italian Dramatic Traditions and Comforting Rituals: Some Initial Considerations," in *Crossing the Boundaries: Christian Piety and the Arts in Italian Medieval and Renaissance Confraternities*, (ed.) Konrad Eisenbichler (Kalamazoo, MI: 1991), 33–55 and eadem, "Scaffold and Stage: Comforting Rituals and Dramatic Traditions in Late Medieval and Renaissance Italy," in *The Art of Executing Well: Rituals of Execution in Renaissance Italy*, (ed.) Nicholas Terpstra (Kirkville, MO: 2008), 13–30.

While a lot of excellent work has been done by social historians looking at the contributions confraternities made to the wider society by way of hospitals, hospices, education, dowries, and so forth, there is still much more that should be examined, especially in the area of wealth management (endowments, buildings, properties, farms, etc.), all of which contributed, in a variety of ways, to the well-being of the confraternity and the wider community.

It should be clear by now that, in spite of their secrecy and exclusivity, confraternities were actively engaged in the community around them. Some even went beyond the local community to serve as points of reference between different political, religious, linguistic, and even ethnic spheres. The fourth section in our volume thus looks at confraternities in a transcultural world, that is, in a Europe and an America very much characterised by diversity. One of the primary sites of such diversity was Rome, the Eternal City, capital in Antiquity of a large multicultural empire and, in later centuries, of Christianity. Not surprisingly, Rome has been, for millennia, a magnet for people, the site of constant immigration and ethnic/linguistic diversity. In her contribution to the collection Anna Esposito examines the “national” confraternities established by expatriate communities in Rome. In these associations, immigrants could find a support network and a familiar cultural/linguistic context that would help them not only acclimatise to, but also integrate into the new environment, all the while maintaining their distinct cultural/linguistic identity. Dominika Burdzy follows suit by discussing the dynamics of confraternities in premodern Poland, a region at the cross-roads not only of Germanic and Slavic cultures, but also, and more importantly, of Catholic and Orthodox Christianity. Central and eastern Europe were, in fact, a vast mosaic of religions, languages, cultures, and ethnicities that was reflected in the sort of lay religious associations present in the area—there were Catholic, Orthodox, Uniate, Armenian, Jewish, and Tatar confraternities and their aims were, as one might expect, religious, charitable, educational, and cultural. By focusing, for this article, on Orthodox and Uniate confraternities, Burdzy highlights the religious tensions that separated them, but also their contribution to the development of education, printing, and shelters in the region. Murdo J. MacLeod takes us across the Atlantic to examine the great variety and number of confraternities in the Viceroyalty of New Spain (modern-day southern USA, Mexico and Central America). Although there were a few confraternities that had members of different ethnic origins, most were racially exclusive and welcomed only Spanish, or Black, or Amerindians as *cofrades* (members). Because of this, and other factors, there existed a large variety of behaviours and histories in New World confraternities that intersected to form a rich mosaic of lay religious associations and cultures. The section ends with Federica Francesconi’s article on

Jewish confraternities in Europe. Surveying the development of these institutions from 14th-century Aragon to 17th-century Germany via 16th-century Italy, Francesconi points out not only the diversity inherent in these associations, but also their constant focus on charitable activities on behalf of the community. Clearly influenced by the Christian milieu that surrounded them, Jewish confraternities nonetheless were able to establish their own specific identity in line with their own traditional beliefs and practices. In so doing, they strengthened the community, its culture, and its devotional life.

Alongside religious devotion and charitable activities, confraternities contributed extensively to the arts and letters of their community by sponsoring literary works (especially plays and poetry), by commissioning or receiving artistic works of all types (paintings, statues, illuminated books, ecclesiastical vestments, religious objects, and, of course, buildings), and by sponsoring the performance of musical works, both vocal and instrumental. The last section in this collection looks at some of the contributions confraternities made to the arts and letters of Europe.

Music played an important role in the activities of confraternities. Its purpose, methods, and repertoires varied greatly from place to place and over time. Music was used in private devotional services, in public processions (both religious and civic), in elaborate celebrations of patron saints, and to memorialise deceased brothers. Some confraternities performed the music themselves, while others hired professionals, often of the highest calibre. Simple, monophonic *laude* (devotional songs in the vernacular) were popular from the 14th to the 16th century, but some confraternities also cultivated complex polyphony and musical theatre, eventually giving birth to new musical genres such as the opera and the oratorio. Jonathan Glixon's contribution to this volume provides a survey of the breadth of musical practices in European confraternities and examines some particular examples, including the *laudesi* companies of Florence, the *scuole grandi* of Venice, with their elaborate processions and spectacular annual celebrations, the brotherhoods of the Low Countries with their repertoires of Renaissance polyphony, and the Counter-Reformation oratorio in confraternities in Florence.

Alongside music, one of their richest and most extensive contributions confraternities made to European culture was in theatre. Confraternities often mounted plays for special occasions—Christmas, Easter, Corpus Christi, their patron saint's day, Carnival. Some were especially commissioned for the occasion, other were revivals of previously composed theatrical works, some were by anonymous authors, other by well-known dramatists and literati. English guilds are famous for the colossal cycles of mystery plays they mounted along the streets and squares of their town. Some of these cycles took one,

two, or even three days to perform from beginning to end. The one mounted in Chester in the 14th and 15th centuries consisted of 24 different pageants; the Wakefield or Towneley cycle had 32; the Coventry or N-Town cycle had 42; and the York Corpus Christi cycle 48.²⁰ In all four English cases, the plays depicted Salvation History from Creation to Doomsday. The individual plays were mounted and performed by the town's guilds, in some cases on the basis of an implied connection between the trade and the event depicted in the play—for example, the shipwrights' guild in York staged the play on the building of the ark, while the baker's guild staged the play of the Last Supper. Most of the time, however, guilds and confraternities staged much more modest theatrical works—short one-act liturgical or devotional plays, plays drawn from sacred history or medieval hagiography, and, sometime, even secular plays. In her contribution to this volume Nerida Newbigin offers a detailed description of the various types of plays Italian confraternities were wont to stage in the 15th and 16th centuries and their contexts. Drawing extensively on confraternal records, she examines both why and how the plays were performed, and who benefited from this kind of theatre.

Theatre was also an important confraternal genre in other countries. Anne-Laure Van Bruaene examines the particular case of the Netherlandish “chambers of rhetoric” that arose in the early 15th century as confraternities that used literary exercises (poetry and theatre) as a medium to express devotion. In the 16th century their creative handling of biblical texts opened the way for a variety of Reformed thought. When the territory of the Low Countries split in two, with a Protestant Dutch Republic in the north and a Catholic Spanish Netherlands in the south, the chambers of rhetoric in the Dutch Republic were secularised (as were other guilds), while those in the Spanish Netherlands continued to function as religious organisations, now very much in the service of Catholic orthodoxy.²¹

Across the way, in northern France, we find a similar case of confraternities using literature, in this case poetry, to foster devotion. Here confraternities organised *puy*s, that is, annual poetry competitions in praise of the Virgin Mary. Although the number of such confraternities, which came to be known as *puy*s themselves, was small, they were often quite prominent in town. Dylan Reid surveys the *puy*s in such town as Arras, Valenciennes, Dieppe, Abbeville,

20 See the many volumes of primary sources published by the Records of Early English Drama project (Toronto). See also Alexandra F. Johnston, “The Plays and the Religious Guilds of York: The Creed Play and the Pater Noster Play,” *Speculum* 50.1 (1975): 55–90.

21 For the more political/reformist side of the chambers of rhetoric, see Gary Waite, *Reformers on Stage: Popular Drama and Religious Propaganda in the Low Countries of Charles V, 1515–1556* (Toronto: 2000).

and then focuses on the one in Rouen to point out the important role these confraternities and their competitions played in the expression of individual, but also group devotion, their engagement with other arts (visual and aural), and their strong connection with their city and its civic pride. Reid concludes by inviting readers to pursue further research on confraternities that used literature to inspire and advance religious devotion, pointing out that *puy*s, or their equivalents, are not unique to northern France—in Spain some confraternities organised *justas*, poetry competitions that honoured a religious feast; in Rome, the humanist Pomponio Leto established a literary academy that, in time, became a confraternity under the protection of Saints Victor, Fortunatus, and Genesius.

But above all, the life, devotion, and even corporate identity of confraternities was thoroughly marked by the presence of art. It was impossible not to encounter art in a confraternity, whether on the walls, on the altar, in the cupboards, in objects, in books, or in the building itself. Confraternities decorated everything and put their “seal” or emblem on most, if not all, their possessions.²² Not surprisingly, art historians have been one of the most active researchers scouring confraternity records in search of information on art works and artists or in order to better understand how a certain work might have been used by its owners or received by its early modern viewers.²³ Alyssa Abraham opens our discussion on confraternity art by focusing on two confraternities in Modena, surveying some of the art they owned, and then pointing out how such art was used in a devotional context. William R. Levin looks instead at a very specific set of artworks from the ancient confraternity of the Misericordia, in Florence, to support his theory for an earlier date for the sodality’s charitable activities on behalf of the city’s orphans. Together, these two articles point to the variety of ways in which confraternity art can be used as visual evidence for a sodality’s devotions, charitable works, and corporate identity or, from the perspective of art history, how art was commissioned, used, and understood by a medieval or early modern viewer.

The wealth of both discipline-based and interdisciplinary studies of lay religious associations, be they confraternities, religious guilds, or some variant on

22 For a room by room description of a confraternity complex, including the artworks and furniture in the various rooms, see Eisenbichler, *The Boys of the Archangel Raphael*, chapt. 5; but see also chapt. 19 for a survey of the confraternity’s artworks.

23 See, for example, the extensive archival work on art in Florentine confraternities present in Ludovica Sebgondì’s *La compagnia e l’oratorio di San Niccolò del Ceppo* (Florence: 1985), *Tre confraternite fiorentine* (Florence: 1991), and “Tracce per la ricostruzione del patrimonio artistico delle confraternite fiorentine soppresse da Pietro Leopoldo.” *Rivista d’arte* 7 (1991): 229–244.

the genre, is a growing field of research both locally and internationally. The last few decades have seen an exponential increase in publications that point not only to a vitality of interests, but also to nuanced new insights into medieval and early modern Christianity as understood, experienced, and lived by the laity of the time. As this volume suggests, a lot has been accomplished, but there still is much more to be done. In the vast world of confraternities there are still many paths to be pursued and new venues to be explored on our way to a fuller and more nuanced understanding of the Christian tradition in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance.

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PART 1

Birth and Development



Confraternities as Such, and as a Template for Guilds in the Low Countries during the Medieval and the Early Modern Period

Paul Trio

1 Confraternity or Guild or ... ?

Recent research into the nature of a Bruges corporation which united, among others, the Bruges producers and merchants of manuscripts, printed books, illuminations and engravings revealed that later researchers were confused by the profusion of names for this organisation in contemporaneous sources between 1454 and the middle of the 16th century, a confusion that prevented them from establishing the precise nature of the corporation. Guild (*gilde*) and confraternity (*broederschap*) were found, as well as company (*gezelschap*) and trade (*nering*). The researchers' conclusion that it was some kind of a trade guild (*neringgilde*), that is a guild consisting mainly of a certain type of craftsmen but also strongly confraternal in character, illustrates the often hybrid character of corporations in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Times.¹ Other researchers have also noticed the diversity of names during that period.² However, the fact that the same type of institution was often referred to by various names does not mean that the names were mostly given at random. Corporations, moreover, tended to evolve over time, so a different name might well indicate a change. Even so, the linguistic confusion that would seem to have existed at the time has caused problems for many historians. What is more, it also often causes those same historians to use less precise terminology when discussing corporations. A very recent—and otherwise

1 Paul Trio, "Colard Mansion and the Bruges Guild of Book Producers and Merchants (1457/58–1484)," in *Colard Mansion. Incunabula, Prints and Manuscripts in Medieval Bruges*, (eds.) Evélien Hauwaert et al. (Amsterdam: 2018), 43–47.

2 Catherine Vincent, "Fraternités laïques et monastères bénédictins au XII^e siècle: quelques questions à partir d'une *fraternitas* de l'abbaye de Saint-Vincent du Mans," in *Les mouvances laïques des ordres religieux. Actes du Troisième Colloque International du C.E.R.C.O.R. en collaboration avec le Centre International d'Études Romanes. Tournus, 17–20 juin 1992* (Saint-Etienne: 1996), 27.

excellent—book on the medieval history of Bruges is affected by this flaw.³ One should, however, not blame its authors for this fact, for even specialists with regard to confraternities or guilds have not always paid enough attention to this problem. That is precisely why the need to examine the terminology used in the sources is greater than ever when one studies corporations. There is an equally great need for present-day historians to better elucidate their jargon concerning corporations, and to apply it adequately and consequently. This terminological confusion is also present in some other recent studies on the Low Countries.⁴

2 Adequate Professional Jargon and Simplified Classification of Corporations

Anyone visiting a sizeable town in the late-15th-century Southern—and to some extent also Northern—Low Countries, would have come into contact with all kinds of corporations: confraternities, guilds of clerics, merchants, craftsmen, rhetoricians, archers ... and this list does not even include all types of confraternities and guilds, or certain other kinds of companies and associations. The terminology that will be used to refer to those organisations and, by doing so, characterise them, will hereafter be clarified. Indeed, the risk of confusion is great without the consistent and logical use of more or less well-defined concepts that are as much as possible in keeping with medieval reality and, at the same time, scientifically workable. All too often in the past writers and scholars have failed to use such a strict terminological system with regard to corporations, one that precisely defines what each term means; the resulting confusion was intensified by the various languages used in the sources and studies. Unfortunately, even more recent publications still often contain a not very precise or scientifically sound terminology with regard to corporations

3 Andrew Brown and Jan Dumolyn (eds.), *Medieval Bruges, c.850–1550* (Cambridge: 2018), *passim*. In this book, some of the authors use the terms “fraternity,” “confraternity,” “guild,” and “company” interchangeably for one and the same type of corporation.

4 The research of Ellen Decraene of the University of Antwerp with regard to the presence of women in confraternities in the town of Aalst deals exclusively with the 17th and 18th centuries, a time when confraternities were changing form. See Ellen Decraene, “Sisters of Early Modern Confraternities in a Small Town in the Southern Netherlands,” *Urban History* 40 (2012): 247–270; Idem for Maarten van Dijck, “Bonding or Bridging Social Capital? The Evolution of Brabantine Fraternities during the Late Medieval and the Early Modern Period,” in *Faith’s Boundaries. Laity and Clergy in Early Modern Confraternities*, (eds.) Nicholas Terpstra, Adriano Prosperi, and Stefania Pastori (Turnhout: 2012), 153–186.

such as confraternities.⁵ One's confusion only increases when confronting publications in the various national languages. Because of this, it is often difficult to compare the organisations one has studied with those studied in a broad international context, since one risks comparing apples and oranges. This continuing problem effectively frustrates any attempt to give a detailed outline of the evolution of corporate life over a longer period of time and for an extensive region. And yet, that is precisely what this article first and foremost aims to do.

The fact that guilds exhibited characteristics of confraternities does not mean that those organisations developed from confraternities or that they initially donned the garb of a confraternity as a suitable organisational and practical form. Certain researchers, among them Michaud-Quantin, have defended this claim. They assumed that the founders and organisers of other types of corporations had used the confraternity as a kind of template to shape and develop them.⁶ That might explain why the distinction between confraternities and other corporations cannot always be easily made, not just by the researcher, but probably also by contemporary people. This article will examine the extent to which this claim holds true for our field of research. Further on, it will also attempt to find out whether certain categories or types of confraternal organisations can be distilled from the very diverse forms of confraternities.

The focus of this article will be on the Netherlands or Low Countries, from the eleventh to the first half of the 16th century. Special attention, however, will be paid to the situation in the former County of Flanders, which by and large covered the region of the provinces of West- and East-Flanders in Belgium, as well as parts of the present-day Netherlands (to wit Zeeland) and France (the adjoining region of Northern France). That is because Flanders was for a long time the economic engine of the Low Countries. With its extremely high

5 See, for example, Maarten van Dijck, "Bonding," 153–186; Madelon van Luijk, "Mors certa, hora incerta. De zorg voor de doden bij lekenbroeder- en zusterschappen in de late Middeleeuwen, in het bijzonder in Leiden," *Holland, regionaal-historisch tijdschrift* 32 (2000): 221–243; Llewellyn Bogaers, "Broederschappen in laatmiddeleeuws Utrecht op het snijpunt van religie, werk, vriendschap en politiek," *Trajecta. Tijdschrift voor de geschiedenis van het katholiek leven in de Nederlanden* 8 (1999): 97–119. A survey of the historiography, particularly with regards to confraternities, can be found in Bram van den Hoven van Genderen and Paul Trio, "Old Stories and New Themes: An Overview of the Historiography of Confraternities in the Low Countries from the Thirteenth to the Sixteenth Centuries," in *Religious and Laity in Western Europe, 1000–1400. Interaction, Negotiation, and Power*, (eds.) Emilia Jamrozak and Janet Burton, (Europa Sacra) 2 (Turnhout: 2006), 357–384.

6 Pierre Michaud-Quantin, *Universitas. Expressions du mouvement communautaire dans le Moyen Age latin*, (L'Eglise et l'État au Moyen Age) 13 (Paris: 1970), 192–193.

population density and some of the largest cities of Europe north of the Alps (such as Ghent, Bruges and Ypres), Flanders had become one of the most urbanised regions of Western Europe, rivalling Northern Italy.⁷ This specific social development in the County of Flanders has also put its stamp on corporate life there. In the cities, a rich and diverse corporate life originated very early on. Thanks to the very favourable production and survival of the sources, possibilities for researchers abound. Naturally, the observations for Flanders may to some extent apply to the rest of the Low Countries, but one should of course always take into account temporal and spatial differences. Indeed, despite all their differences, the Low Countries formed a strong religious, socio-economic, cultural, and political unity. As a result, there were many points of contact and similarities, including where corporations are concerned.⁸

3 The Diversity of Corporative Life

A clearer delineation of the subject might also bring some more clarity, since it defines what is part of our field of study and what is not. The present-day use of the term “confraternities” for certain (semi-)religious communities is not recommended, even though some communities were given that name in contemporary sources.⁹ Furthermore, this article will not discuss the communities concerned with the maintenance of hospices, hospitals and other such caregiving institutions or the care for persons in them. This is not as self-evident as it might seem, since in the Middle Ages those communities were sometimes called “confraternities” and consequently also by modern historians. The so-called “confraternities” of the Holy Spirit, among others, present a more difficult problem. Especially in the Southern Low Countries, these were at the basis of what later became the Tables of the Holy Spirit that shaped parish charity in that region. Occasionally, these also developed into hospices or hospitals.

7 See in general, with further bibliography: Van Bruaene, Anne-Laure, Blondé, Bruno and Boone, Marc (eds.), *Gouden eeuwen: stad en samenleving in de Lage Landen (1100–1600)* (Ghent: 2016), *passim* and especially the introduction. In what follows, the name confraternity between quotation marks (“confraternity”) will also be used to indicate corporations whose nature is somewhat unclear, but whose name—as found in the sources and as used by modern historians—suggests that they resembled confraternities as defined above.

8 Wim Blockmans, “Eenheid in verscheidenheid,” in *De gouden Delta der Lage Landen: twintig eeuwen beschaving tussen Seine en Rijn*, (eds.) Herman Balthazar et al. (Antwerp: 1996), 1–10.

9 Mol talks about “religious confraternities” to refer to convents of brothers of the German Order: J.A. Mol, *De Frieze huizen van de Duitse Orde. Nes, Steenkerk en Schoten en hun plaats in het middeleeuwse Friese kloosterlandschap* (Leeuwarden: 1991), 17.

It is possible that in all those cases, the word “confraternity” is rather used to indicate the hospital community that also participated in that community.¹⁰

The element that the older bonds of prayers—or more properly “communities of prayers”—shared with later confraternities is their core function, namely the celebration of the *memoria*, that is liturgical remembrance.¹¹ This *memoria* aspect, so desired by faithful laymen and clerics, clearly stemmed from the monastic tradition. Indeed, the oldest examples date from the 8th century and hence fall outside our area of research. With their origins in the Carolingian period, they would continue to flourish until the Late Middle Ages. In essence, it was about the exchange of prayers, liturgical services, and charitable works between ecclesiastical institutions such as monasteries and chapters on behalf of their own members. The names of the individual participants were recorded in, among others, the *libri vitae*, death rolls, necrologies, and chapter books. From the 10th century onwards, one can also find them in the Southern Low Countries, initially mainly in Flanders. At that time, outsiders—both clerics and laypeople—were accepted as members of the communities. Some were accepted as an act of grace, but most outsiders became members only after they had made a sizeable donation. This exchange of benefits fitted perfectly with the then current *do ut des* principle (I give so you will give).¹² In some cases, this also included the right to a funeral within the walls of the ecclesiastical institution or some other kind of material return such as hospitality or a prebend. In Flanders, as elsewhere, such communities are first found attached to large Benedictine abbeys (the abbey of Saint Bertin in Saint-Omer in 745, or the abbey of Saint Bavon in Ghent in 976). From the 11th century onwards, chapters of regular canons also began forming communities of prayers. The Benedictine influence, especially from the Cluny movement, played a crucial role in that evolution. Even though they were given the name of “confraternity”—as the terms *fraternitas*, *societas* and afterwards also *caritas* suggest—they cannot yet

10 Some examples have been explored in detail in Arnoud-Jan Bijsterveld and Paul Trio, “Van gebedsverbroedering naar broederschap. De evolutie van het *fraternitas*-begrip in de Zuidelijke Nederlanden in de volle Middeleeuwen,” 2, *Jaarboek voor middeleeuwse geschiedenis* 9 (2006): 7–46.

11 Bijsterveld and Trio, “Van gebedsverbroedering,” 1; 2, 7–15; Arnoud-Jan Bijsterveld, “Looking for Common Ground: From Monastic *Fraternitas* to Lay Confraternity in the Southern Low Countries in the Tenth to Twelfth Centuries,” in *Religious and Laity in Western Europe, 1000–1400. Interaction, Negotiation, and Power*, (eds.) Emilia Jamrozak and Janet Burton, (*Europa Sacra*) 2 (Turnhout: 2006), 287–314.

12 Arnoud-Jan Bijsterveld, “The Medieval Gift as Agent of Social Bonding and Political Power: A Comparative Approach,” in *Medieval Transformations. Texts, Power, and Gifts in Context*, (eds.) Esther Cohen and Mayke Brechtje de Jong, (*Cultures, Beliefs and Traditions. Medieval and Early Modern Peoples*) 11 (Leyden: 2001), 123–156.

be considered as such. Indeed, they did not meet the criteria of the—in our opinion—accepted definition by the pioneer of the study of medieval confraternities, Gilles Gerard Meersseman: true society with a gradually increasing endowment, a governing body, and periodically recurring meetings (“wahre Genossenschaft mit Vorstand, allmählich wachsendem Vereinsbesitz und periodisch wiederkehrenden Tagungen.”)¹³ Even so, these communities of prayers were of paramount importance for the continued development of confraternities, also in the Low Countries.

Finally, certain “associations or companies” whose confraternal character has not been firmly established were left out of consideration. These include, for instance, the (district) companies of youngsters who devoted themselves to the feast of the maypole, the association of the Blue Barge that was always referred to as a “guild” and focussed mainly on celebrating carnival, and finally the more aristocratic associations that focussed on organizing tournaments. The latter type, for instance, included the company of the White Bear, which consisted mainly of members of the Bruges urban elite.¹⁴

4 Confraternities

A next step in the gradual transition from the monastic prayer bond to the confraternity took place in the Southern Low Countries during the 11th and 12th centuries, more specifically within the context of the Benedictine abbeys. Indeed, the first real confraternities—as defined earlier—originated in that environment. Though initially still completely controlled by the abbey administrators, to the extent that they can be called monastic or abbatial confraternities, they would gradually become more autonomous. Since the first guilds of merchants also came into being at this time, this raises the question

13 Gilles Gerard Meersseman, “Zur Geschichte des mittelalterlichen Genossenschaftsrecht. Vorschriften eines Bischofs des 14. Jahrhunderts für die Priesterkalande,” in *Gottesreich und Menschenreich. Festschrift Ernst Staehelin zum 80 Geburtstag* (Basel: 1969), 32; Gilles Gerard Meersseman, with the collaboration of Gian Piero Pacini, *Ordo fraternitatis. Confraternite e pietà dei laici nel Medioevo*, (Italia Sacra. Studi e documenti di storia ecclesiastica), 24–26. 3 vols (Rome: 1977), 10–17.

14 For such types of associations: Raymond Van Uytven, “Scènes de la vie sociale dans les villes des Pays-Bas du xvi^e au xvi^e siècles,” in *Actes du colloque La sociabilité urbaine en Europe du Nord-Ouest du xvi^e au xviii^e siècle (5 février 1983)*, (Mémoires de la Société d'Agriculture, Sciences et Arts de Douai), series 5: 8 (Douai: 1983), 11–31; Herman Pleij, *Het gilde van de Blauwe schuit. Literatuur, volksfeesten en burgermoraal in de late middeleeuwen*, 2nd ed. (Amsterdam: 1983); Dries van den Abeele, *Het ridderlijk gezelschap van de Witte Beer: steekspelen in Brugge tijdens de late middeleeuwen* (Bruges: 2000).

whether they had a completely different origin or whether there may have had some affinity with the developing confraternities.

4.1 *Monastic or Abbatial Confraternities*¹⁵

When first confronted with communities of prayer and monastic confraternities, one might see how present-day researchers—and perhaps also people in the Middle Ages—might fail to distinguish clearly between the two types. Monastic confraternities originated within the context of Benedictine monasteries, their names did not immediately change, and certain aspects of their activities—such as the care for the *memoria*—were hardly distinguishable from those of the prayer communities. As a result, it is difficult for researchers to distinguish between the two types of institutions, especially since often there is only fragmentary information available. Moreover, there may have been some intermediary stages of development between them, which means that it may not even be possible to draw a clear distinction. Indeed, there are many corporations that are difficult to categorise. When, some time ago, Ursmer Berlière studied monastic confraternities, he always labelled them *confréries bénédictines* or (fully-fledged) “Benedictine confraternities.”¹⁶ The matter is preferably handled with a little more circumspection. The organisation in question resembles more an intermediary stage between the community of prayer and the fully autonomous confraternity. For the period until 1200, ten more examples can be found in the Southern Low Countries, all of which were connected to a Benedictine abbey, with the exception of one that was linked to the Bruges secular chapter of Saint Donatian. For all of these examples, there are references only in charters from 1085–1089, with the exception of a dubious mention in the year 963 at the abbey of Gembloux. Most commonly found are the names *fraternitas*, *caritas*/*karitas* and *societas*, while *confraria*, *confratriam*, *consortium* and *gulde* were used only once. This *fraternitas* under the auspices of the abbey had some important characteristics, to wit the fact that the abbey had taken the initiative to organise it and the fact that its purpose was explicitly a material one, namely the restoration of the abbey church and/or the livelihood of the monks. Furthermore, it was open to both men and women, who paid a mandatory annual contribution, and the names of its members were recorded in some kind of membership list.

15 For additional information about all the examples from the period until 1200 see Bijsterveld and Trio, “Van gebedsverbroedering.” It should be mentioned that my opinion has since somewhat changed on some points.

16 Ursmer Berlière, “Confréries bénédictines au Moyen-Age,” *Revue liturgique et monastique* 12 (1926–1927): 135–145.

The annual payment of a “membership fee” in particular seems to distinguish this type of *fraternitas* from the earlier community of prayer, which required a one-time substantial gift.¹⁷ However, there seems to have been no obligation to be present at the liturgical services or at other gatherings of the “confraternity” or community. Its members seem to have been primarily passive participants. Referring to our definition of the confraternity, one cannot in this case speak of a fully-fledged confraternity.

There is less doubt about the confraternal character of the organisation controlled by the abbey of Sint-Truiden in 1192, with which we start things off. A choice was made, however, to illustrate the confraternal character of these organisations on the basis of the monastic confraternity of Saint Livinus that was connected to the Benedictine abbey of Saint Bavon in Ghent.¹⁸ In a document from 1283/84 n.s. listing the rights and duties of its members, one can read that:¹⁹ members, both men and women, from Ghent and the surrounding area, come together three times a year, on the feasts of Saint Livinus. They attended mass in the abbey church and offered up gifts during offertory, in honour of Saint Livinus, whose relics are preserved in the abbey church. The members partook in the benefits resulting from the masses, prayers, and charitable works of the abbey and they enjoyed the advocacy of Saint Livinus. When a member died, everybody paid a death fee to the sacristan of the abbey. With these revenues, the confraternity paid for the candles burning in front of the saint’s reliquary, which was one of the major tasks of the confraternity. Any member could have a final resting place within the abbey walls—for a suitable fee, of course. Indigent members, who could not afford to pay for their funeral, received the support of the confraternity. The confraternity had its own government. The members were expected to daily offer up certain prayers in

17 Compare with Catherine Vincent, “Fraternités laïques,” 283–287, who, in this context, speaks about a wave of democratisation in the field of prayers.

18 Paul Trio, *De Gentse broederschappen (1182–1580). Ontstaan, naamgeving, materiële uitrusting, structuur, opheffing en bronnen*, (Verhandelingen der Maatschappij voor Geschiedenis en Oudheidkunde te Gent) 16 (Ghent: 1990), 38–43; there, I claimed that this confraternity dated back to the end of the 12th century, but this thesis can no longer be sustained. With regard to this confraternity and the devotion to Saint Livinus see Paul Trio, *Volksreligie als spiegel van een stedelijke samenleving. De broederschappen te Gent in de late middeleeuwen*, (Symbolae Facultatis Litterarum et Philosophiae Lovaniensis) Series B, vol. 11 (Louvain: 1993), *passim*; Paul Trio, “De Gentse abdijen van Sint-Pieters en Sint-Baafs tijdens de late middeleeuwen. Een historisch overzicht (13de–15de eeuw),” in *Ganda en Blandinium: de Gentse abdijen van Sint-Pieters en Sint-Baafs*, (ed.) Georges Declercq (Ghent: 1997), 71–72; and Paul Trio, “Volksdevotionele aspecten in de Sint-Jans- en de Sint-Baafskerk tot omstreeks 1560,” in *De Sint-Baafskathedraal in Gent van Middeleeuwen tot Barok*, (ed.) Bruno Bouckaert (Ghent: 2000), 40–44.

19 These regulations, which perhaps cannot yet be called true statutes, have been published in Trio, “Statuten,” 299–308.

favour of the souls of the living and dead fellow-members. Only those fulfilling all their duties could partake in the benefits of Saint Livinus and the abbey. Even though there are clear indications that the confraternity had a more or less independent organisation with its own government and active members, the abbey continued to exert some level of control and used the confraternity to boost its own income. Furthermore, the aspect of memorial care, also present in the communities of prayer, continued to play a crucial role. The corporate idea as exemplified by frequent collective gatherings, on the other hand, was still rather limited at that time. No mention is made, however, of a communal meal, which goes against Huyghebaert's assertions about this type of confraternities.²⁰

In the period after 1300, the phenomenon of monastic confraternities is still found in the houses of the mendicant orders. However, despite the fact that confraternities were still overseen, in some way, by the monasteries that housed them, one can see that they had much more autonomy than their counterparts from the previous period.²¹

4.2 *Parish Confraternities with a Clerical Aspect*

Even though some early examples of parish confraternities from the 12th and the first half of the 13th century—such as a “confraternity” of Our Lady connected to the parish church of Saint Aubert in Arras (1119), a *confrerie* in Lens (1189) and a *fraternitas* in Sint-Truiden linked to the parish church of Our Lady there (1171)—are known, it is not until the second half of the 13th century that this kind of confraternity began to appear *en masse* in the sources. More or less similar confraternities of Our Lady appear in the region in the following decades, for instance in Tongeren (ca. 1262), Sint-Truiden (1265), Diest (1282), Zoutleeuw (1290) and Tienen (before 1291).²² I was able to better inventory this type of confraternity during my research into the confraternities of late

20 Nicolas Huyghebaert, *Les documents nécrologiques*, (Typologie des sources du moyen âge occidental) 4 (Turnhout: 1972); *mise-à-jour* by J.-L. Lemaître (Turnhout: 1985), 22.

21 Paul Trio, “Broederschappen bij bedelorden in de Nederlanden gedurende de late middeleeuwen. Enkele bedenkingen bij de bronnen en de mogelijkheden van het onderzoek,” in *Godsdienst, Mentaliteit en Dagelijks Leven. Religieuze geschiedenis in België sinds 1970 / Religion, Mentalité et Vie Quotidienne. Histoire religieuse en Belgique depuis 1970. Handelingen van het colloquium van 23 en 24 september 1987 / Actes du colloque des 23 et 24 septembre 1987*, (eds.) Michel Cloet and Frank Daelemans (Brussels: 1988), 54–59.

22 Berlière, “Confréries bénédictines,” 136–137; Lodewijk Jozef Maria Philippen, “De “confraternitates clericorum et sacerdotium B.M.V.” en de wonderdadige Mariabeelden,” in *Handelingen van het Vlaamsch Maria-Congres te Brussel, 8–11 september 1921*. 2 vols (Brussels: 1922), 1:64–83; Jan Paquay, “De O.L.V.-broederschappen in het oud bisdom Luik,” in *Handelingen van het Vlaamsch Maria-Congres te Brussel, 8–11 september 1921* (Brussels: 1922), 72–80; Marc Lauwers, *La mémoire des ancêtres, le souci des morts. Morts, rites et*

medieval Ghent until 1580.²³ It is preferable to use the term “parish confraternity,” this indicates first and foremost that this confraternity, always dedicated to Our Lady, recruited almost exclusively within the parish boundaries. In Ghent, they appear in the sources only around 1300, but most of them were probably much older. Another aspect was their strongly clerical character, though clerical membership and participation in government declined rapidly during the course of the 14th and 15th centuries. They also typically paid much attention to financing the candles for lighting the parish church and used an altar or chapel in the apse at the back of the church. Each of Ghent’s seven parish churches housed this type of confraternity. When consulting the literature for other Flemish towns, one finds that they also occurred in other urban parish churches.²⁴ Because of their “fonction d’organiser les funérailles et les suffrages pour les défunts,” Lauwers considered them to be the replacement in an urban context of the earlier abbatial confraternities.²⁵ Because of the increased membership, ordinary members around 1400 were no longer obliged to be present at the funeral of a fellow-member since the burden had become too heavy for those who were still professionally active.²⁶

4.3 A Great Diversity of Confraternities

Apart from the abovementioned monastic confraternities and parish confraternities, other types came to light during our in-depth research of the Ghent situation: confraternities of pilgrims and elite confraternities. A typical

société au moyen âge (diocèse de Liège, XI^e-XIII^e siècles), (Théologie historique) 103 (Paris: 1997), 80–86 and 467–468.

23 Because of the large number of sources that was preserved, I found some forty confraternities before 1578: Trio, *Volksreligie, passim*; Trio, *De Gentse broederschappen, passim*; Paul Trio, “Lay Persons in Power: The Crumbling of the Clerical Monopoly on Urban Devotion in Flanders, as a Result of the Rise of Lay Confraternities in the Late Middle Ages,” in *Early Modern Confraternities in Europe and the Americas. International and Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, (eds.) Christopher Black and Pamela Gravestock (Burlington: 2006), 53–63. A typical example of statutes has been published in Trio, “De statuten,” 301–304. For two Ghent churches, with some additions, see also Annelies Somers, “*Amici nunc sicut et antea*.” *Een stedelijke parochiekerk en een prinselijk kapittel tussen kerk en wereld in het laatmiddeleeuwse en vroegmoderne Gent. Sint-Niklaas en Sint-Veerle, 1384–1614* (PhD thesis, University of Ghent, 2015), 499–514.

24 Lodewijk Jozef Maria Philippen, “De aloude Mariabroederschappen in onze gewesten,” *Standaard van Maria* (1960): 221–225; Trio, “Lay Persons”; Georges Espinas, *Les origines de l’association. I: Les origines du droit d’association dans les villes de l’Artois et de la Flandre Française jusqu’au début du XVI^e siècle*, (Bibliothèque de la Société d’Histoire du Droit des Pays Flamands, Picards et Wallons) 14–15. 2 vols (Lille: 1941–42); Trio, *Volksreligie*, 90–92. See also note 22.

25 Lauwers, *La mémoire*, 467.

26 Trio, *Volksreligie*, 284–295.

confraternity of pilgrims in Ghent was that of Saint James of Compostela. With its date of origin around 1250, it is also the oldest in the Low Countries. Two decades later, in about 1270, the confraternity was already using a hospital to accommodate pilgrims on their way to Compostela, offering them a bed and a meal. The membership lists that have been preserved start around 1270, which makes that earliest list also one of the oldest membership lists of a confraternity in the Low Countries.²⁷ Within the town, every large parish had its own subdivision. In the Low Countries, one can also find confraternities of pilgrims going to Jerusalem or Rome. Initially, these confraternities were always established by former pilgrims, but after a while they also enrolled persons who promised to undertake such a pilgrimage or were prepared to pay a higher membership fee. In a way, this type of confraternity offered what one might call a vicarious pilgrimage experience to those that could not or would not undertake the actual journey. The pilgrimage to Saint James of Compostela was so much more popular than the other pilgrimages that the number of its confraternities in the Low Countries—as elsewhere—was many times higher than that of other pilgrim confraternities.²⁸ There were also pilgrimage confraternities for sites of a more regional or “national” importance, such as, for instance, to Our Lady of Halle (near Brussels) in the Southern Low Countries, especially from the 15th century onwards.²⁹

While most confraternities strove to attract as many members as possible—possibly in search of additional revenues—there were some confraternities that accepted only a limited number of people. As a result, their membership

27 Both (with membership lists only until 1300) have been published by Maurits Gysseling, with the collaboration of Willy Pijnenburg, *Corpus van Middel nederlandse teksten (tot en met het jaar 1300), 1ste Reeks: Ambtelijke bescheiden*, (Bouwstoffen voor een woordarchief van de Nederlandse taal), 9 vols (The Hague, 1977–1978), 1:151–181.

28 Paul Trio, “Middeleeuwse pelgrimsbroederschappen te Oudenaarde,” *Handelingen van de geschied- en oudheidkundige kring van Oudenaarde, van zijn kasteel en van den Lande tusschen Maercke en Ronne* 28 (1991): 131–152; André Georges, *Le pèlerinage à Compostelle en Belgique et dans le Nord de la France. Suivi d'une étude sur l'iconographie de Saint-Jacques en Belgique*, (Mémoires de l'Académie royale de Belgique) Collection—4°. Classe des Beaux-Arts, 2nd series 13 (Brussels: 1971), 108–140; Jan van Herwaarden, “De verering voor Santiago de Compostela in de Nederlanden: een verkenning,” in *Pelgrims door de eeuwen heen. Santiago de Compostela*, (ed.) Jan van Herwaarden (Turnhout: 1985), 221–254; Wolfgang Schneider, *Peregrinatio Hierosolymitana. Studien zum spätmittelalterlichen Jerusalembräuchtum und zu den aus der Heiliglandfahrt hervorgegangenen nord-westeuropäischen Jerusalembruderschaften* (Münster: 1982).

29 Gaston Renson, “Bijdrage tot de studie der broederschappen van O.-L.-Vrouw van Halle en de verering in andere landen,” *De Brabantse Folklore* 157 (1963): 43–105; Philippe Mertens, “*Ad tam pium tamque benignum sacrificium manus porrigatis adiutrices.*” *De aflatverlening en questen ten behoeve van de O.L.Vrouwkerk te Halle, circa 1335–1483*, (Koninklijke geschied- en oudheidkundige kring Halle) 4 (Halle: 1990).

was rather exclusive, consisting mainly of members of the higher social classes in town. Since this small group also had to provide the necessary working capital for the confraternity, members had to be persons of substantial means. In these corporations, most members participated far more actively than was the case in other confraternities. Indeed, in confraternities with many members, there usually was a small core who frequently held offices and actively fulfilled their duties and a large group of other members who paid their dues, but were not very involved in confraternal activities. In exchange for their membership fee, they did partake in the masses, prayers, and charitable works of the confraternity, but apart from that, their role within the confraternity was rather a passive one. Because of this, it was possible for many medieval persons to be members of more than one confraternity and, sometimes, also of more than one guild.³⁰

5 Guilds

Before discussing their relationship with the confraternities in general, let us first examine the different types of guilds present in the Low Countries.

5.1 Merchant Guilds

During the 11th century, when trade began to flourish thanks to a booming economy, merchants felt the need to organise themselves.³¹ As a result, already

30 Contrary to what is said in Van Dijk "Bonding or bridging social capital?." His information for the late medieval and Early Modern period (until ca. 1550) is insufficient to make any assertions.

31 With regard to the Low Countries and Flanders, see the still "classic" older studies: Herman vander Linden, *Les gildes marchandes dans les Pays-Bas au Moyen Âge*, (Université de Gand. Recueil de travaux publiés par la Faculté de Philosophie et Lettres) 15 (Ghent: 1896); Emile Coornaert, "Les ghildes médiévales (v^e–xiv^e). Définition. Evolution," *Revue historique* 199 (1948): 22–55 and 208–243; Hans Van Werveke, "Hansa" in Vlaanderen en aangrenzende gebieden," *Handelingen van het Genootschap voor Geschiedenis* 90 (1953): 5–42; Carlos Wyffels, "De Vlaamse Hanze van Londen op het einde van de xiii^e eeuw," *Handelingen van het Genootschap gesticht onder de benaming Société d'Emulation te Brugge* 97 (1960): 5–30; Peeters, Jean-Paul, "Het verschijnsel der gilden en hanzen in de middeleeuwse steden in de Nederlanden," *Belgisch Tijdschrift voor Filologie en Geschiedenis* 62 (1984): 271–288. A more complete bibliography per guild can be found in Roberta Dessi and Sheilagh Ogilvie, "Social Capital and Collusion: The Case of Merchant Guilds (Long Version)," *Cambridge Working Papers in Economics* 417 (2004). More recently: H.R. van Ommeren, *De koopmansgilderol van Deventer, 1249–1387*, (Werken uitgegeven door het Nederlands Historisch Genootschap) 3, no. 87 (The Hague: 1987); Jean-Paul Peeters, "Het verschijnsel der gilden en hanzen in de middeleeuwse steden in de Nederlanden,"

before 1100, merchant guilds appeared in several cities of the Low Countries,³² as they did, also, elsewhere, especially in England and the Rhineland. The best known of the guilds in other countries is the one in Tiel (1018). Some of the oldest merchant guilds are found in what was then the County of Flanders; for example, the ones in Valenciennes (around 1050, with statutes from the 11th century)³³ and Saint-Omer (second half of the 11th century, with statutes from the end of that century).³⁴ The earliest trace of a merchant guild in Ghent dates back to about 1060.³⁵ After a while, almost every large Flemish city must have had a merchants' guild. Outside Flanders, merchant guilds are a lot more recent: Deventer (1249 and following), Middelburg (1271), Mechelen (1276) and Antwerp (1308). Their range of action was also often more limited, since they gathered only cloth merchants.³⁶ As a result of the decline in trade in Flanders during the course of the 13th and 14th centuries, most of the merchant guilds disappeared.³⁷ Some guilds managed to survive a little longer if they adapted to changing circumstances. Naturally, they were professional associations that sought to organise trade from and to their own city and, at the same time, monopolise it. Indeed, often one could not be involved in trade if one was not a member of this guild, that is the so-called guild pressure or mandatory membership. Because of their important economic role and the fact that they often consisted of members from (part of) the urban elite, these guilds were sometimes also given authority over matters of public interest, such as the administration of the town hall.

For a very long time, there has been an ongoing discussion as to whether these merchant guilds developed from the confraternities, or whether they go back to the Carolingian "guilds." To support the latter thesis, researchers have pointed out the mutual assistance, including charity, and conviviality that

Belgisch Tijdschrift voor Filologie en Geschiedenis 62 (1984): 271–288; Bijsterveld and Trio, "Van gebedsverbroedering," 2: 28–30.

32 I will not discuss here the associations of merchants from different towns, assembled with the purpose of trading "abroad."

33 Published in Georges Espinas and Henri Pirenne, "Les coutumes de la gilde marchande de Saint-Omer," *Le Moyen Age* 14 (1901): 189–196.

34 Published in Charles Gross, *The Gild Merchant* (Oxford: 1964), 290–292; Henri Caffiaux, "Mémoire sur la charte de la frairie de la halle basse de Valenciennes (XI^e et XII^e siècles)," *Mémoires de la Société Nationale des Antiquaires de France* 38 (1877): 25–41.

35 Hans Van Werveke, *De Gentsche stadsfinanciën in de middeleeuwen*, (Koninklijke Belgische Academie. Afdeling Letteren, enz. Verhandelingen. Verzameling) in 8°, series 2, 34 (Brussels: 1934), 18–22.

36 Van Werveke, "Les 'statuts' latins"; Van Ommeren, *De koopmansgilderol*, 28 and 41.

37 On their origin, heyday and decline, mainly from an economic perspective: Oscar Gelderblom, "The Decline of Fairs and Merchant Guilds in the Low Countries, 1250–1650," *Jaarboek voor Middeleeuwse Geschiedenis* 7 (2004): 199–211.

became apparent in, among other things, frequent meals and drinking bouts, as can be found in the statutes of the guilds of Saint-Omer and Valenciennes. In Carolingian times, the *confraternitates* and *guldae* were severely berated by the ecclesiastical authorities, among them by Archbishop Hincmar of Rheims (d. 882) for such excesses.³⁸ For that reason, they were sometimes called *conjuraciones*. Some historians even think that they might date back as far as the Post-Roman period, and were Christianised only afterwards.³⁹ Already very early on, this thesis was upheld by, among others, Vander Linden,⁴⁰ and some still adhere to it.⁴¹ Nonetheless, this type of corporation is also characterised by confraternal elements. About half of the statutes contain a religious agenda, which always mentions the funeral and the remembrance of the dead.⁴² The organisation is usually called a *confraternitas*, *carité*, *frairie*, or *fraternité*,⁴³ though sometimes also *hansa*, and its members are called “brothers.” Such organisations were governed by *deken*s (deans) or *proosten* (provosts), while *aalmoezeniers* (chaplains) looked after the religious aspects of the association. Research has shown that, simultaneously with or posterior to the actual merchant guild, there sometimes also existed an association of merchants almost exclusively focused on the group’s economic aspect, such as the “confraternity” or *hansa* of Saint-Omer (*confrarie ke on apele hanse*) with statutes dating from shortly before 1241 and a membership list covering the period 1241–1369.

5.2 Craft Guilds

The mixed character of merchant guilds is also found in the late medieval craft and trade guilds,⁴⁴ though the origin of this type of corporation is initially to

38 Otto Gerard Oexle, “Conjuratio und Gilde im frühen Mittelalter. Ein Beitrag zum Problem der sozialgeschichtlichen Kontinuität zwischen Antike und Mittelalter,” in *Gilden und Zünfte. Kaufmännische und gewerbliche Genossenschaften im frühen und hohen Mittelalter*, (ed.) Berent Schwineköper, (Vorträge und Forschungen) 29 (Sigmaringen: 1985), 155; Bijsterveld and Trio, “Van gebedsverbroedering,” 2: 25–26 and 28.

39 Oexle, “Conjuratio”; Otto Gerard Oexle, “Die mittelalterlichen Gilden. Ihre Selbstdeutung und ihr Beitrag zur Formung sozialer Strukturen,” in *Soziale Ordnungen im Selbstverständnis des Mittelalters*, (ed.) Albert Zimmermann, (Miscellanea Mediaevalia) 12, 2 vols (Berlin: 1979–1980), 203–226.

40 Vander Linden, *Les gildes*, 2–3.

41 E.g. Carlos Wyffels, “Hanzen in westelijk Vlaanderen,” *De Franse Nederlanden* 15 (1990): 170, who even has them go back as far as the Germanic associations from the 5th century; Alain Derville, “Ghildes, carités, confréries dans le Saint-Omer médiéval,” *Bulletin trimestriel de la Société académique des antiquaires de la Morinie* (1959): 193–211, who claims that the one of Saint-Omer goes back on a Post-Carolingian “guild” and generalises this example.

42 Vander Linden, *Les gildes*, 10–11.

43 Vander Linden, *Les gildes*, 13.

44 For a bibliography on professional corporations in the Southern Low Countries within the various urban industries, see *Les métiers au Moyen Age: aspects économiques et sociaux*,

be found in the confraternities.⁴⁵ The need to get organised naturally became more urgent as the number of persons with the same professional activity increased, though other factors such as political, military, and social ones may also have influenced this evolution.⁴⁶ Since in the Low Countries during the 12th and 13th centuries employers monopolised the town government, that government did not allow employees in the same industry to organise themselves as an autonomous craft for fear that they might then claim a political role. They did, however, allow them to organise themselves into craft guilds where religious activities such as the veneration of the patron saint, the remembrance of the dead—including giving members a suitable funeral—prevailed and charity towards impoverished members of the association was a priority. In some cases, this even led to the exploitation by the guild of their own hospice for elderly or sick colleagues.⁴⁷

The first forms of associations among artisans date back to the 11th century, when the brewers of Huy united into a guild (1068), but in general one has to wait until the 12th century to see fully-fledged craft guilds come into existence. It seems that blacksmiths were the first to gather into guilds, in their case under the patronage of Saint Eloy (Eligius): Bethune (1188),⁴⁸ Mechelen and Louvain (1254) and Ghent (1273).⁴⁹ Though these guilds were spread over the Southern Low Countries, other corporations of skilled labourers of the same or related professions are found mainly in Flanders, especially starting in the

(eds.) Pascale Lambrechts and Jean-Pierre Sosson, (UCL. Publications de l'Institut d'Études Médiévales. Textes, études, congrès) 15 (Louvain-la-Neuve: 1994); Marc Jacobs and Marianne Vanbellinghen, "Ambachten in de Zuidelijke Nederlanden (voor 1795). Een bijdrage tot de samenstelling van een bibliografische lijst van studies verschenen in de 19de en 20ste eeuw," *Oostvlaamse Zanten* 74 (1999): 185–320.

45 Bijsterveld and Trio, "Van gebedsverbroedering," 31–32.

46 Regarding the origin of the craft guilds and afterwards the crafts in Flanders, see Carlos Wyffels, *De oorsprong der ambachten in Vlaanderen en Brabant* (Verhandelingen van de Koninklijke Vlaamse Academie voor Wetenschappen, Letteren en Schone Kunsten van België. Klasse der Letteren) 13 (Brussels: 1951), though it does not really focus on the political pressure exerted by them.

47 Wyffels, *De oorsprong*, 122–142, speaks of an *ambachtsbroederschap* (craft confraternity) in this context.

48 Some circumspection is required with regard to this date, since it is found in a relatively recent literary source: Bernard Delmaire, *Le diocèse d'Arras de 1093 au milieu du XIV^e siècle. Recherches sur la vie religieuse dans le nord de la France au Moyen Âge*. (Mémoires de la Commission Départementale d'Histoire et d'Archéologie du Pas-de-Calais) 31. 2 vols (Arras: 1994), 379–383.

49 Also see Raymond Van Uytven, "Het stedelijk leven 11de-14de eeuw," in *Algemene Geschiedenis der Nederlanden*, (eds.) D.P. Blok et al. (Haarlem: 1982), 2:210–211; Anne Libois, "La confrérie de Saint-Eloy de Bruxelles, des origines à 1477," *Annalen van de Belgische Hospitaalgeschiedenis* 5 (1967): 45–75; 6 (1968): 31–77; 7 (1969): 85–112.

last quarter of the 13th century. It is probably not a coincidence that quite a few craft guilds, and especially the large ones, had their altar or chapel in the churches of the mendicant orders, who were obviously more in touch with the middle and lower classes.⁵⁰

Recently, there has been much research with regard to the actual crafts, who were allowed to organise themselves as independent professional corporations only from 1302 (Battle of the Golden Spurs) onwards, with Flanders as a forerunner.⁵¹ This research focuses, on the one hand, on their economic activities and, on the other hand, on the political participation exerted by the craft and on the level of democracy and social mobility within the organisation.

Trades (*neringen*) can be seen as professional corporations that were somewhat less strictly regulated than the crafts and, moreover, usually failed to obtain any political power because they gained a corporate shape later than the actual crafts. Their recognition and regulation also fell under the authority and control of the town government. And just as was the case for the crafts, their membership—and the accompanying right to practise that profession—was restricted to the burghers.⁵²

Little research has been carried out into religious activities as an essential part of the craft's corporate activities. Similarly, historians have not sufficiently realised that there were different solutions to the quest for an organisational structure. On the one hand, there were the craft guilds, in which both the economic and the religious aspect were organised within a single organisation; on the other hand, it happened that a separate corporation was created for each of those two concerns, each with its own administration. In this way,

50 Trio, "Broederschappen bij bedelorden"; Delmaire, *Le diocèse d'Arras*, 379–83; Wyffels, *De oorsprong*; Huyghebaert, *Les documents nécrologiques*, 23. On the role of the mendicant orders, see Walter Simons, *Stad en apostolaat. De vestiging van de bedelorden in het graafschap Vlaanderen (ca. 1225—ca. 1350)*, (Verhandelingen van de Koninklijke Academie voor Wetenschappen, Letteren en Schone Kunsten van België, Klasse der Letteren) 49 no. 121 (Brussels: 1987), 14 and 227–228.

51 See, for example, Catharina Lis and Hugo Soly, *Werelden van Verschil. Ambachtsgilden in de Lage Landen* (Brussels: 1997); Peter Stabel, "Labour Time, Guild Time? Working Hours in the Cloth Industry of Medieval Flanders and Artois (Thirteenth-Fourteenth Centuries)," *Tijdschrift voor Sociaal-Economische Geschiedenis*, 11 (2014): 27–53; Jan Dumolyn, "I Thought of It at Work, in Ostend': Urban Artisan Labour and Guild Ideology in the Later Medieval Low Countries," *International Review of Social History* (2018), in print; Bert De Munck, "Artisans, Products and Gifts: Rethinking the History of Material Culture in Early Modern Europe," *Past and Present: A Journal of Historical Studies* 224 (2014): 39–74; also see their publications on the website of their universities, of Ghent and Antwerp.

52 Albert Schouteet, "Ambachten te Brugge onder het ancien régime," in *Tentoonstelling. Op en om de bouwwerf. Ambachtswezen-oud gereedschap. Catalogus, Stadshallen 7 mei–15 juni 1975. Stedelijke Musea. Museum voor Volkskunde*, (eds.) Willy P. Dezutter and Marcel Goetinck (Bruges: 1975), 15–26; Trio, "Colard Mansion," 43–47.

the craft guild functioned next to the craft. The term craft (*ambacht*)—and by extension trade (*nering*)—first and foremost indicated the economic corporation while “guild” indicated a more religiously-tinted corporation, which means that its purpose and content strongly resembled that of a confraternity.⁵³ Their membership also differed slightly since the craft or trade guild was exclusive to people working in that craft or trade, while that of the guild was not. Nonetheless, there were close contacts between the craft or trade, and the corresponding guild, with some kind of collaboration or even partial assimilation. The latter was often the case when both craft and guild had the same governors. Anyone looking into the crafts and trades of late medieval Flanders should take that into account. Hitherto, this has rarely been the case. Minstrels’ and musicians’ guilds were a somewhat separate category among the craft guilds, as can be seen in Bruges around the middle of the 14th century.⁵⁴ Priests and clerics (lower orders) could also gather into guilds not only for the confraternal aspect of their interests, but also for professional reasons. This is why, in those cases, guilds of priests or clerics should also be discussed.⁵⁵

5.3 *Guilds of Rhetoricians and Archers*

In the last decades, research into guilds of rhetoricians and of archers in the Low Countries has been intense, both at the local/regional level and more

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- 53 The best general discussions of the social and religious aims are still to be found in some of the older studies: Emile Huys, *Duizend jaar mutualiteit bij de Vlaamsche gilden*. 2 vols (Courtrai: 1926), 42–43; Paul Allossery, *Het gildeleven in vroeger eeuwen* (Bruges: 1926), 221–239, which also contains the texts of various statutes. See also Trio, *Volksreligie*, 46.
- 54 Anne-Laure Van Bruaene, “*Om betters wille*”: *rederijkerskamers en de stedelijke cultuur in de Zuidelijke Nederlanden, 1400–1650* (Amsterdam: 2008), 28; Paul Trio and Barbara Haggh, “The Archives of Confraternities in Ghent and Music,” in *Musicology and Archival Research, Colloquium Proceedings, Brussels, 22–23.4.1993*, (eds.) Barbara Haggh et al. (Archief en bibliotheekwezen) extra no. 46 (Brussels: 1994), 44–90.
- 55 More in general: Oexle, “Die mittelalterlichen Gilden”; Oexle, “Conjuratio,” 175–186; Paul Trio and Marc Carnier, “La confrérie nommée ‘kalande’: réminiscence d’une organisation à base décanale, dans le comté de Flandre au Moyen Age,” in *Van Ieperse scholen en lenen, schilderijen en criminelen, uit velerlei eeuwen*, (ed.) Rik Opsommer (Ypres: 1999), 291–299; Trio, “Lay Persons in Power,” with references to the older literature; Huyghebaert, *Les documents nécrologiques*, 23. For Normandy: Catherine Vincent, *Des charités bien ordonnées. Les confréries Normandes de la fin du xiii^e siècle au début du xvi^e siècle* (Collection de l’École Normale supérieure de jeunes filles) 39 (Paris: 1988), 40–42. For a survey of this issue in the German-speaking world, see Malte Prieztel, *Die Kalande im südlichen Niedersachsen. Zur Entstehung und Entwicklung von Priesterbruderschaften im Spätmittelalter*, (Veröffentlichungen des Max-Planck-Instituts für Geschichte) 117 (Göttingen: 1995). With regard to Liège: Christian Dury, “Fraternités et clergé secondaire du diocèse de Liège au Moyen Age. Contribution à la protohistoire des assemblées représentatives,” *Le Moyen Age* 96 (1990): 287–316.

generally. This research clearly shows how the first guilds to appear availed themselves of the confraternal template to shape their organisation.⁵⁶ It is now evident that when guilds were being created in the context of the institutionalisation of literary activities from about the middle of the 15th century they followed the form and organisation of the confraternity. The veneration of a patron saint, the maintenance of an altar or chapel, and memorial care for deceased members were as important to them as the organisation of literary activities. The oldest example of this combination in its fully completed form is the rhetoricians' guild of the Fountain (*Fontaine*) in Ghent, founded shortly before 1446; its statutes from 1448 have been preserved.

As for the guilds of archers, the recent literature is somewhat less clear.⁵⁷ This is partly a result of the fact that it was influenced by older literature, which was often too gullible when reading late medieval or post-medieval assertions that these corporations had a venerable age.⁵⁸ The earliest guilds of archers were those of Ghent (1314–1315), Bruges (1321), and Lille (1323). Oudenaarde appears in the sources only in 1349, but it does offer us the oldest preserved statutes of an archers' guild.⁵⁹ It is a charter, issued by the aldermen of the town, in which they approve these statutes.⁶⁰ The earliest records of some archers' guilds display more signs of a confraternity than of an archers' organisation. When the archers' guilds finally made their appearance in their full glory, around the middle of the 15th century—quite a bit earlier than elsewhere in

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- 56 Van Bruaene, "Om betters wille," *passim*; but in particular 27–51 and 201–215, with references to the older literature; Anne-Laure Van Bruaene, "A Wonderfull Tryumfe For the Wynnnyng of a Pryse': Guilds, Ritual, Theater, and the Urban Network in the Southern Low Countries, ca. 1450–1650," *Renaissance Quarterly* 59 (2006): 374–405; Arjan Van Dixhoorn, *Lustige geesten. Rederijkers in de Noordelijke Nederlanden (1480–1650)* (Amsterdam: 2009).
- 57 Bert Gevaert and Reinier Van Noort, "Evolution of Martial Tradition in the Low Countries: Fencing Guilds and Treatises," in *Late Medieval and Early Modern Fight Books. Transmission and Tradition of Martial Arts in Europe (14th–17th Centuries)*, (eds.) Daniel Jaquet, Karin Verelst and Timothy Dawson, (History of Warfare) 112 (Leyden: 2016), 378–383, especially with regard to Bruges and Ghent, see also the literature list; Marc Boone, (ed.), *Gedenkboek 700 jaar Sint-Jorisgilde Gent* (Ghent: 2014); *Schutters in Holland. Kracht en zenuwen van de stad*, (eds.) Marijke Carasso-Kok and Koos Levy-van Halm (Zwolle-Haarlem: 1988).
- 58 See Paul Trio, "De aansluiting in 1360 van de Ieperling Pieter Paeldinc in het Oudenaardse gilde van de kruisboogschutters van Sint-Joris tegen de achtergrond van de vroegste geschiedenis van deze schuttersvereniging," *Handelingen van de Geschied- en Oudheidkundige Kring van Oudenaarde, van zijn Kastelnij en van den Lande tusschen Maercke en Ronne* 53 (2016): 122–127, with an illustration for the case-study of Oudenaarde.
- 59 Lodewijk Van Lerberghe et al., *Audenaerdsche mengelingen* (Oudenaarde: 1854), 6:1–6.
- 60 I have earlier expressed serious doubts with regard to the dating of the membership list of the archers' guild in Oudenaarde. This has hitherto been dated in 1322 (see e.g. also Laura Crombie, *Archery and Crossbow Guilds in Medieval Flanders, 1300–1500*, (Woodbridge: 2016), 31, 145–148, 196 and 233). Additional research to re-date the list is still required. See Trio, "De beginperiode," 122–127.

the Low Countries⁶¹—it is clear that they grafted the structure of the archers' guild upon the structure of the confraternity.⁶²

6 How to Avoid a Babylonian Confusion?

The confusion of tongues is also present in the Dutch-speaking region, to which much of the then Low Countries belonged.⁶³ When one looks at the terminology used by modern historians, either in a recent or a more distant past, the most diverse terms are found: *broederschap*, *gilde*, *genootschap*, *kalande*, *(con)fraterniteit*, *ambacht*, *nering*, or such words combined with adjectives: *geestelijk broederschap* (i.e. spiritual confraternity), *religieuze gilde* (i.e. religious guild) or *lekenconfrerie* (i.e. lay confraternity), to name but those most commonly found.⁶⁴ Some authors even saw no problem in using in their publications several of these terms to refer to a single type of corporation. On the other hand, some historians have been found to stick to a single name to indicate very different types of corporative organisations. Moreover, there have been many cases in which terms related to corporations were used to refer to non-corporative structures. A community of prayers, for instance, was also sometimes called a confraternity.

This terminological confusion, which was and still is present in most national languages, is often a result of the fact that contemporary sources used a no more consistent or uniform terminology than historians do. So it would seem that not only the modern researcher is confused, but so were medieval people. For instance, when focusing on the names in the Latin sources, one finds *(con)fraternitas*, *kalanda*, *gilda*, *caritas*, *collegium*,

61 Alfons Ising, *Met vliegend vaandel en slaande trom. Ontstaan en ontwikkeling van schuttersgilden en schutterijen in Brabant en Limburg* (Hapert: 1986).

62 Marc Lemahieu, *Het wezen van de eerste Vlaamse schuttersgilden: ... met eenre gemeyne begeerten omme lavenisse haerer zielen, ...* (Bruges: 2008); Crombie, *Archery, passim*; Karlijn Sies, "Ordonnatien ende Preveligien." *Vergelijking van de reglementeringen van de Vlaamse en Brabantse schuttersgilden* (MA thesis, KU Leuven, 2016), based on the statutes.

63 This does not, of course, negate the importance of French in that region. French was not just an important working language in the medieval county of Flanders, especially for the administration, but during the entire 19th century and part of the 20th century, it was the only "scientific" language in Belgium, also for historiography.

64 See C.I. Kruisheer, *De Onze Lieve Vrouwe-broederschap te Doesburg, ca. 1397–1580. Godsdienstige broederschappen en hun achtergrond. Bloeiperiode van de O.L.Vrouwe-broederschap, neergang door kentering in het geloofsleven. Het memorieboek als bron van genealogische gegevens* (Ellecom: 1976), 6–10; Jan van Herwaarden and Raf De Keyser, "Het gelovige volk in de late middeleeuwen," in *Algemene geschiedenis der Nederlanden*, vol. 4, (eds.) Dirk Peter Blok et al. (Haarlem: 1981), 413. Other language areas naturally experience the same problem.

communitas, *consortium* and *universitas*, to list but a few.⁶⁵ Researchers all too easily assume that these terms were largely interchangeable. Though this was occasionally the case, careful terminological research—which is always essential—often reveals that such interchangeability is less self-evident than one might assume. Often the terminology used not only reflected the character or the individuality of the corporation, but also varied according to the region and period in which the corporation functioned.⁶⁶ When a corporation was called a *kalanda* (*cal(/a)nde*), for instance, this often meant that it had a strongly clerical character and that it originated a long time ago. Such a corporation might, of course, first appear under that name only in late medieval sources, at a time when that clerical character had already disappeared.⁶⁷

When deciding what terminology to use, a researcher has to make a considered choice and find a balance between, on the one hand, the terms that are closest to those used in contemporary sources and were influenced by their geographical and temporal context, and, on the other hand, a logical, uniform, and adequate set of concepts that once more takes into account the language one speaks or in which one writes. Moreover, one should always keep an eye out for intermediary forms and changes. On the basis of all this, I have come to the following conclusion with regard to the Dutch language region, with also suggestions for the names to be used in English, French and German, though I am, obviously, less qualified to do so for the latter regions.

Regarding the corporations to be found in Flanders and, mostly, also in the rest of the Low Countries, one should distinguish between two major groups, namely the *broederschap* (*confraternity*, *confrérie*, *Bruderschaft*),⁶⁸ on the one hand, and the *gilde* (*guild*, *gilde*, *Gilde*), on the other.⁶⁹ Confraternities are then

65 See, for instance the dictionaries by Kiliaan (1599) for Dutch, and Du Cange (1873–88) for Latin, with examples from the Low Countries: <http://www.dbnl.org> and <http://ducange.enc.sorbonne.fr>.

66 See our research on the confraternity of Our Lady in Ypres, originally a guild of students or pupils: Paul Trio, “De statuten van de laat-middeleeuwse clericale O.L.V.-broederschap van de studenten van Parijs te Ieper” in *Handelingen van de Koninklijke Commissie voor Geschiedenis* 148 (1982), 91–141; Paul Trio, “A Medieval Students Confraternity at Ypres. The Notre Dame Confraternity of Paris Students,” *History of Universities* 5 (1985): 15–53. In connection to this aspect, see the interesting considerations by Michaud-Quantin, *Universitas*.

67 Trio and Carnier, “La confrérie,” 291–299.

68 Other closely connected terms such as *fraternity* or *brotherhood* could, in principle, also be used.

69 Compare, for instance, with German, which makes a distinction between *Bruderschaften*, *Gilden* and *Zünfte*: Rudolf Weigand and Bernd-Ulrich Hergemoller, “Bruderschaft,” in *Lexikon des Mittelalters*, vol. 2 (1982), 738.

those corporations that, in essence, almost exclusively focus on religious activities and that cannot be directly linked to professional or economic interests, or to socio-cultural activities with a clear recreational purpose. The term “guilds,” on the other hand, is reserved for corporations that also often display some confraternal characteristics—and sometimes very visibly so—but that were basically shaped by the shared professional, economic, social, or cultural interests. The members of the merchants’ and craft guilds are mainly persons connected to each other by the same or similar professional activities. Within that economic sphere, there are obviously also corporations that display no confraternal elements at all, such as, for instance, the *hansas*, the crafts or workers’ associations. The most important socio-cultural corporations that were active in the Low Countries were the rhetoricians’ guilds that focussed on wordplay and poetry during competitions, processions, and other public displays, within the context of the guild or not. Archers’ guilds handled a weapon (such as a bow or crossbow) and were—especially in the beginning—military in character, though that military element would gradually be replaced by their participation in competitions and parades, partly due to changing warfare tactics. Within the group of confraternities, variation is even greater, as has been discussed before.

7 Conclusion

The sources from the Southern Low Countries seem to support the old hypothesis that late medieval confraternities evolved from the earlier associations of laymen and religious persons, the so-called communities of prayer found near Benedictine monasteries. One should, however, always take into account that those sources may be biased, since they are of ecclesiastical origin and, more specifically, predominantly Benedictine in nature. This does not mean that later confraternities, and especially guilds, were not influenced by the older, profane tradition of guilds. This may be particularly true for their sociability, an important part of which was the guild meal.⁷⁰ Indeed, it has been established that the corporate element—including the communal meal—was not a priority in many confraternities and sometimes was even completely lacking.⁷¹

Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that the not completely “pure” confraternities, to wit the guilds, also availed themselves of the confraternal form to shape their corporations. Certainly, they were characterised by typically confraternal

70 In this respect, I follow the ideas of Oexle, “Conjuratio,” 171–172; Oexle, “Die mittelalterlichen Gilden,” *passim*, who also discusses the statutes of Valenciennes.

71 Paul Trio, *Volksreligie*, 307–312.

elements, such as memorial care and the veneration of a patron saint. For a more systematic and lucid discussion of the development of medieval confraternities and guilds, a rather strict distinction between them had to be devised and within each category additional subdivisions had to be created; still, anyone using such a classification should not be limited by too strict an adherence to it. Indeed, reality was sometimes more complex than such a schematic representation might suggest. Examples abound. Quite a number of archers' guilds, for example, also practised the art of rhetoric and were involved in its organisation,⁷² and some clerical guilds slowly evolved into confraternities of both clerics and laymen. A scientifically valid classification of the medieval corporations of a confraternal nature serves only as a means to a better understanding the phenomenon, but should never be considered an absolute given.

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72 Laura Crombie, "French and Flemish Urban Festive Networks: Archery and Crossbow Competitions Attended and Hosted by Tournai in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries," *French History* 27 (2013): 157–175; Van Bruaene, "A Wonderfull Tryumfe."

Change and Continuity: Eucharistic Confraternities in Ticino and Switzerland before and after Trent

Davide Adamoli

1 Introduction

In Swiss historiography, confraternities are a niche topic. Although almost exclusively an object of study for local historians, they had a remarkable relevance for the religious life of the population at all social levels, both clerical and secular. They existed in a territory lacking in considerable diocesan centres and, from the 16th century, split between two extremely complex confessional fronts, full of underlying shades and tensions. Considering the difficulties in building bridges between historical linguistic traditions, this brief article cannot delineate a general history of Swiss confraternities, or even of the Alpine area, so it will examine, instead, the relationship on a regional level between Church-institution and the general and singular developments of the many confraternities active on the territory. It will highlight the developments of confraternal associations in the Italian-speaking area of the Canton of Ticino, which remained within the Catholic faith, in the key period between the Catholic Pre-Reform and the first decade after the Council of Trent.

More specifically, this article will begin with a brief presentation of the state of Helvetic historiography on confraternities, followed by a short contextualisation of the lives of confraternities south of the Alps between the Middle Ages and the 16th century. The article will then turn its focus on the case of the confraternity of the *Corpus Domini*, or *Santissimo Sacramento*, founded around 1530 in the borough of Bellinzona, a town defined for centuries as the “key of the Alps” as it was an unavoidable part of the journey between Milan (and Lombardy) and the Swiss Plateau and the Rhineland, when going through the Saint Gotthard and Saint Bernardino passes. The recovery of some unpublished registers of this confraternity allows for a better understanding of the reasons for its founding and growth, the new requirements imposed by Tridentine reforms, and the most esteemed models of confraternal life of the time, the flagellant confraternities. Local events in Bellinzona will be linked with Swiss religious history and the confraternal movement in the 16th century between north-central Italy and the Alpine region, including some areas farther

north of Ticino. In so doing, this article will underline some aspects that might constitute topics for future research, not only in Ticino, but also in the rest of Switzerland.

2 Is There a Historiography of Confraternities in Switzerland?

Confraternities have aroused only a secondary and local interest in Swiss historiography which, on the whole, has mostly favoured the Middle Ages and our last two centuries.¹ As a result, the history of confraternities has remained linked to ecclesiastical studies and has not attracted scholars of social history. Between the 16th and 18th centuries, in the wake of the Protestant Reformation, confraternities have been seen as a glorious but by now *dépassé* inheritance of the distant Middle Ages, a rear-guard of Catholicism, as crutches for a society and a Church increasingly behind the times with respect to the progress of the modern (absolutist) state of the Enlightenment, and to new ways of living, no longer influenced by the Baroque and the age of devotion.²

Several syntheses testify to this, including the noteworthy *Histoire du Christianisme en Suisse: Une histoire oecuménique* (1995), which, especially for the Tridentine and Baroque periods, refers to confraternities only marginally, thereby diminishing their importance and presence in the devotional world of the 17th and 18th centuries.³ This was done, as the volume's subtitle implies, in order to find points of convergence between the two dominant confessions in Switzerland. In the 19th and 20th centuries, confraternities were, in fact, viewed in an optic of decadence, sustained, for Catholics, only by the attempt of creating a closed milieu in opposition to the openness promoted by liberal society. A more balanced view can be found, instead, in the article in the *Dizionario storico della Svizzera italiana* that underlines the lack of specific studies on confraternities in Switzerland.⁴

1 For an overview see <http://libraries.admin.ch/cgi-bin/gw/chameleon?skin=biblio&lng=de> (accessed: 30 December 2017).

2 Danilo Zardin, "Beyond Crisis: Confraternities in Modern Italy between the Church and Lay Society," in *Faith's Boundaries. Laity and Clergy in Early Modern Confraternities*, (eds.) Nicholas Terpstra, Adriano Prosperi, Stefania Pastore (Europa sacra) 6 (Turnhout: 2012), 331–351; new version of "Tra Chiesa e società 'laica': le confraternite in epoca moderna," *Annali di storia moderna e contemporanea*, 10 (2004): 529–545, with reference to the Dioceses of Como.

3 *Histoire du Christianisme en Suisse: Une histoire oecuménique*, (eds.) Lukas Vischer, Lukas Schenker, Rudolf Dellsperger (Geneva: 1995), 151–152. For the Catholic milieu, see Urs Altermatt, *Cattolicesimo e mondo moderno* (Locarno: 1996).

4 <http://www.hls-dhs-dss.ch/textes/i/I46924.php> (accessed: 30 December 2017).

Within this historiography, there are only a few works that delve beyond the borders of single regions. A first attempt was made in 1955 by the Benedictine monk Rudolph Henggler, who provided an interesting list of confraternities in central Switzerland.⁵ His indications are useful for future research; for example, the data gathered allow one to confront, at least on a quantitative and chronological level, the presence of confraternities in the northern and southern regions of the Alps (about 1150–1200 confraternities between the Middle Ages and the contemporary age in both areas).⁶ For the rest, in the second half of the 20th century, publications were limited to a few booklets, articles, or publications of a celebratory nature or historical notes in the edition of statutes.⁷ Not even

5 Rudolph Henggler, *Die kirchlichen Bruderschaften und Zünfte der Innerschweiz* (Einsiedeln: 1955). During those years, the author, who was also *Stiftsarchivar* of Einsiedeln, authored some publications in the historical-religious field, for example: Rudolph Henggler, "Die Rosenkranz-Bruderschaft in Einsiedeln," in *Katholische Marienkunde*, (ed.) Paul Sträter (Paderborn: 1951), 226–246. An essay that goes beyond the local sphere and explores more western areas is Pierre Duparc, "Confréries du Saint-Esprit et communautés d'habitants au Moyen Age," *Revue historique de droit français et étranger*, 36 (1958): 349–367, 554–585.

6 One can see the great presence of medieval confraternities, often linked to monasteries and convents, singular economic branches, and devotions for apotropaic saints. With regards to the southern Alps, instead, the presence of confraternities directly requested by the post-Tridentine Catholic hierarchy is less pervasive (SS. Sacramento, Dottrina Cristiana), except for the case of the confraternity of the Santo Rosario, erected in almost every local parish as well as in other regions; see Davide Adamoli, *Confraternite della Svizzera italiana*, 2 vols (Lugano: 2015), 1:341.

7 These studies touched almost every traditionally Catholic region of Switzerland: for central Switzerland see Franz Auf der Maur—Fridolin Gasser, "Der St. Martinsbruderschafts-rodel der Pfarrei Schwyz," *Mitteilungen des Historischen Vereins des Kantons Schwyz*, 90 (1998): 11–54; Hans Muheim, "Die Bruderschaften vom Hl. Jacobus dem Älteren zu Altdorf, 1573–1993," *Historisches Neujahrblatt Uri*, 49–50 (1994–95): 4–35. For Catholic Aargau see Ernst Bruggiser, "Vom alten Bruderschaftswesen in Bremgarten," in *Bremgarter Neujahrblatt* (Bremgarten: 1986–87). For Sargans and region see Leo Pfiffner, *Acht Bruderschaften in Mels* (Mels: 1997); Matthias Bugg, *500 Jahr St. Magnusbruderschaft Sargans* (Sargans: 1995). For the Italian-speaking valleys of Grisons and Catholic Romansh see Piero Stanga, "Dalle 'liste dei confratelli' del SS. Sacramento di Roveredo del 1698," *Almanacco Mesolcina-Calanca*, 56–58 (1993–95); Urs Netzer, "Savognin e las sias confraternitadas aint ilg decues digls tschentaners," *Calender Surmiran*, 41 (1994): 74–114, Rest Gieri Tschuor, *Cumpignia da mats Rueun* (Rueun: 1997). For Valais see Marcus Seerberger, *Dreikönigs-Brauchtum im Wallis und die Königliche Bruderschaft von Leuk* (Leuk: 1991), and following publications edited by the confraternity, Thomas Antonietti, *Die Herrgottsgrenadiere: Ursprung und Phänomen eines Brauchtums* (Kippel: 1991); Jean von Guntern, "Von der Sebastiansbruderschaft in Sitten," *Blätter aus der Walliser Geschichte*, 24 (1992). For Lucerne see <http://www.herrgottskanoniere.ch> (accessed 30 December 2017). For Fribourg see *Confrérie Saint-Sébastien Fribourg 1814–2014* (Fribourg: 2014). For Solothurn see *450 Jahre St. Lukasbruderschaft Solothurn: 1559–2009* (Solothurn: 2009), *Zum 350-jährigen Bestehen der Bruderschaft Sancti Jacobi Apostoli zu Solothurn*, (ed.) Paul Frey (Langendorf: 2004), Franz Wigger, "Die St. Annakongregation in Solothurn, 1690–1990," *Jurablätter*, 53 (1991), 85–115.

the conference that took place in Lausanne in 1985, in collaboration with the local university, the École Française de Rome, and the CNRS of Paris,⁸ aroused any interest for the topic, except for some mentions in works of synthesis of religious and social history⁹ as well as some dissertations on Romandy and on Zürich.¹⁰ An exception has been in the works by Louis Châtellier, who included Lucerne and Fribourg among the regions studied for the history of European Jesuit congregations.¹¹ The history of confraternities was not, however, included in publications linked to the re-discovery of pastoral visitations.¹² Lastly, the interesting analysis on south-western Germany by Marc R. Foster did not include, in a significant way, the Swiss regions of the dioceses of Constance, even if the reference to French historiography, and in part of the German, are an

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- 8 *Le Mouvement confraternel au Moyen Âge, France, Italie et Suisse*. Actes de la table ronde organisée par l'Université de Lausanne avec le concours de l'École française de Rome et de l'Unité associée 1011 du CNRS « L'institution ecclésiastique à la fin du Moyen Âge » (Geneva: 1987). The chapters edited by Kathrin Utz-Tremp, Louis Binz, Nicolas Morard focus on the Swiss territory. The first contribution has been re-published in Kathrin Utz-Tremp, "Eine spätmittelalterliche Jakobsbruderschaft in Bern," *Zeitschrift für Schweizerische Kirchengeschichte*, 77 (1983): 47–83.
- 9 Franz Xaver Bischof—Cornel Dora, *Ortskirche unterwegs* (St. Gallen: 1997), 83–85; Martin Illi, *Wohin die Toten gingen* (Zürich: 1992), 98–108; Claude Macherel—Jean Steinauer, *L'Etat de Ciel* (Fribourg, 1989), 212–217.
- 10 Franck Fontaine, *Une économie sociale: les comptes de la Confrérie du Saint-Esprit d'Aubonne 1436–1463*, Mémoire de Licence (Lausanne: 2008); Marlyse Messer, *Le registre de la confrérie du Luminaire de St. Clément de Lutry: fonctionnement et financement d'une confrérie au xv siècle (1359–1499)*, Mémoire de Licence (Lausanne: 2002); Marie-Noëlle Licot, *L'âme des comptes: vie et économie de la Confrérie de la Sainte Trinité sise à Genève, 1414–1465*, Mémoire de Licence (Geneva: 1998); Marie-Noëlle Jomini, *Activité et économie d'une confrérie au xv siècle: les comptes de l'Hôpital Neuf et de la confrérie du S. Esprit à Lutry entre 1415 et 1470*, Mémoire de Licence (Lausanne: 1998); Roger Vittoz, *Les confréries de Lausanne au Moyen Âge*, Mémoire de Licence (Lausanne: 1985). For Zurich, see Barbara Helbling—Magdalena Bless-Grabher—Ines Buhofer, *Bettelordern, Bruderschaften und Beginen in Zürich. Stadtkultur und Seelenheil im Mittelalter* (Zürich: 2002). Finally, see Ilaria Taddei, "Fête, jeunesse et pouvoirs. L'Abbaye des Nobles Enfants de Lausanne," *Cahiers Lausannois d'Histoire Médiévale*, 5 (1991).
- 11 Louis Châtellier, *L'Europe des dévots* (Paris: 1987). Marie-Hélène Froeschlé-Chopard, *Les confréries, l'Eglise et la cité, cartographie des confréries du Sud-Est* (Grenoble: 1988) and; Katharina Simon-Muscheid, "Spätmittelalterliche Bruderschaften und Königreiche. Stadtübergreifende und überregionale Netzwerke mobiler Gruppen im eidgenössisch-elsässisch-badischen Raum," in *Mittelalterliche Bruderschaften in europäischen Städten: Funktionen, Formen* (Frankfurt a. M.: 2009), 255–292.
- 12 For eastern Switzerland, see Johannes Duft, *Die Glaubensorge der Fürststäbte von St. Gallen im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert* (St. Gallen: 1947), 188–192; Anton Gössi—Josef Bannwart, *Die Protokolle der bischöflichen Visitationen des 18. Jahrhunderts im Kanton Luzern* (Lucerne: 1992); Hans-Robert Ammann—Arthur Fibicher, *Die Reformbestrebungen des Bischofs Hildebrand Jost. Die Visitation der Diözese Sitten 1623–1626* (Sion: 2015).

optimal starting point for a renewed history of confraternities of the German-speaking part of Switzerland.¹³

3 Confraternities in Ticino between the Middle Ages and the Catholic Pre-Reformation

A different situation can be found only in Ticino. Here it is possible to find local studies—recently, even on a regional scale—that signalled the activity, or at least the presence of confraternities between the late Middle Ages and today. These investigations were inspired by the contacts and confrontations with other research and publications promoted by the nearby Italian regions of Lombardy and Piedmont.¹⁴ The publication of *Materiali e documenti ticinesi*, conducted for a long time by the University of Zürich, identified the earliest presence of Alpine confraternities already in the late 1200s.¹⁵

In a certain way, this historiography followed the true history of the establishment of confraternities from south to north of the Swiss-Italian region. They started with the arrival of the movement of the Bianchi in the 15th century, marking in a lasting way the developments of confraternities in the pre-Alpine borders of Lombardy. The founding of the first associations launched a model of devotional and associative life that became particularly rich in the following centuries. The presence of confraternities in and around the Swiss-Italian region—in Carona, Lugano, Sonvico, Porlezza, Pino-Tronzano, Locarno, Bellinzona, and Daro—came to a halt in the 15th century, though the establishment of companies of Saint Martha continued even later, during the 16th century, in peripheral areas.¹⁶

Still, in the 15th century, a few confraternities dedicated to Saint Peter Martyr were founded, they were called to collaborate in the control and suppression of heresy and witchcraft, a rapidly developing phenomenon in the

13 Marc R. Forster, *Catholic Revival in the Age of the Baroque. Religious Identity in Southwest Germany, 1550–1750* (Cambridge: 2001), 133–146.

14 A starting point was the research by Danilo Zardin, *Confraternite e vita di pietà nelle campagne lombarde tra '500 e '600: La pieve di Parabiago-Lignano* (Milan, 1981) or by Piergiorgio Longo, "Per uno studio delle confraternite novaresi. Prospettive storiografiche e indagini problematiche," *Novarien*, 5 (1973).

15 For an overview in Prato Leventina see *Materiali e documenti ticinesi, Serie I, Regesti di Leventina*, fol. 3, n. 65 (Zurich: 1975), 99–101.

16 Tullio Bertramini, *L'oratorio di S. Marta e la piazza dei miracoli di Craveggia* (Villadossola: 1990) and other publications edited by the same author.

southern Alpine region.¹⁷ Most likely, the presence of these companies was dictated by the desire to control the Alps and the transit routes between Lugano, Bellinzona, Roveredo Grigioni, Morbegno and possibly Poschiavo.¹⁸

A similar situation may have taken place eighty years later in 1534, when a Rosary confraternity was founded in Soazza. This was probably linked to another group of the same kind in Lumino, at the entrance of Val Mesolcina, instituted in an unknown but certainly ancient year.¹⁹ Additionally, the confraternity of the Santo Rosario in Bellinzona might have been founded before the Borromean period. In this context, the presence of the Dominicans of Ascona, in the Church of Santa Maria della Misericordia, is also to be taken into consideration.²⁰

Alongside these foundations, in the territory of the eight southern bailiwicks absorbed by the twelve cantons after the treaty of Perpetual Peace with France in 1516, other local confraternities were founded. Evidence of this is the presence of Marian companies of the Sottoceneri, of confraternities linked to seasonal emigration, especially strong around Locarno, as well as of groups dedicated to Saint Roch and Saint Sebastian in the Blenio valley and Capriasca²¹ or even

17 Rocco da Bedano, "Processi alle streghe: documenti leventinesi del Quattrocento," *Archivio storico ticinese* (1978–1981): 76–88.

18 Adamoli, *Confraternite*, 1:36–37, with reference to Gérard Gilles Meersseman, *Ordo Fraternitatis. Confraternite e pietà dei laici nel medioevo* (in coll. con Pacini Gian Piero) (Rome: 1977), 874–876.

19 About Soazza: Cesare Santi, "Regesti delle pergamene dell'archivio parrocchiale di Soazza," *Quaderni grigionitaliani*, 51 (1982): 69. Santi transcribed the regulation, conserved on a paper document in the parish archive of Soazza: "Al Nome de dio et de la sua madre maria l'ano del 1534 adi 6 de lo mese de aprile fu comenzato lo sacro et santo rosario de la verzene maria in Souazia da tuti quei fratelli et sorelle quali se contene scritto in questo libro li quali fratelli et sorelle del santo rosario sono obligati primeramente a dire hognia tre giorno de la settemane cinque patter e cinquante ave maria per honia dij de quei tri giorni secondo soni obligati ad oferire la prima domeniga del meso uno trijno per persona quali dinari se ne debia tenere conto et comprare lume quando more qualche persone et se faza pigliare quei candeloti et se faza dire doue mese per l'anima sua et quei fratelli et sorelle sono obligati ad dirge uno rosario per l'anima sua zue cinque patter et cinquante ave maria et apresa ad dire cinque patter et cinque ave maria prengado lo omnipotento idio et la sua madre che voglia imprestarge grazia de pervenir ad la gloria de vita eterna amen." (p. 69).

20 Antonietta Moretti, "Domenicani ad Ascona," in *Helvetia Sacra*, IV–5, *Die Dominikaner und Dominikanerinnen in der Schweiz* (Basel: 1999), 182.

21 For an overview see Adamoli, *Confraternite*, 1:44. Aside from the confraternity dedicated to Saint Roch and Sebastian in Corzoneso, a similar "school" was created in Aquila (Archivio Parrocchiale Aquila, Registro dei conti, 1633), and perhaps also in other parishes in Val di Blenio.

those linked to religious orders, as a recent discovery of a scroll with the statutes of a confraternity of the Conception in Lugano demonstrates.²²

In this context, the birth of pre-Tridentine Eucharistic confraternities comes as no surprise. The chronology of these foundations reveals the importance of Swiss-Italian emigration towards Italian centres, as well as boroughs and villages such as Carona (1522), Bellinzona (before 1535), Lugano (1544), Brissago and Ascona (about 1550?), Bissone (1565), some of which were already associated with the archconfraternity of the Santissimo Sacramento erected in Santa Maria sopra Minerva in Rome.²³ The relationship with Rome is also testified by the presence of members of the confraternity of Santo Spirito in Chiggiogna, which from 1518 on was linked to its namesake confraternity in the Eternal City.²⁴

4 The Confraternity of the Santissimo Sacramento in Bellinzona

The religious life of Bellinzona before the 16th century, before the arrival of the Tridentine bishops from Como and the arrival in 1583 of Carlo Borromeo, is rich but still somewhat unexplored. From an ecclesiastic point of view, and aside from the personalities of its archpriests, it is important to remember the lengthy construction of the new collegiate church of Saints Peter and Stephen, which began in 1515 with a ground-breaking ceremony and ended with its consecration in 1565 celebrated by bishop Giovanni Antonio Volpi of Como.²⁵

For the religious life of the borough, one might examine an unpublished 16th-century register of the confraternity of the Corpus Domini which contains many details on the life of the company as well as the context in which it

22 Archivio Diocesano di Lugano (ADL), Fondo Archivi parrocchiali, Carona, pergamena 1518.

23 For example Bissone, 1565: ADL, Fondo Visite Pastoralì, 3 Archinti, 168 (1597). In nearby Brusino, instead, the Eucharistic confraternity, founded in 1595 (therefore before the first visit by Bishop Giovanni Antonio Volpi), asked for a quick approval and some indulgences from Rome as a sign of the close relationship with the Holy See ADL, VP 55, 6 Olgiati (1719).

24 Adamoli, *Confraternite*, 1:100. Another confraternity dedicated to the Holy Spirit is mentioned also in Brissago, while, in the 17th century, in Mezzovico, there was a private aggregation of about twenty worshippers (the parish's priest and some women), which is the archconfraternity just mentioned: Archivio Parrocchiale Mezzovico, Libro degli iscritti alla confraternita del SS. Sacramento, last folio.

25 Antonietta Moretti, "Le collegiate della Svizzera Italiana," in *Helvetia Sacra*, 2.1 (Basel: 1982): 66–83; Lara Calderari—Patrizio Pedrioli, *La chiesa collegiata dei Santi Pietro e Stefano di Bellinzona* (Bern: 2008).

operated. Judging from the foliation of the register, the confraternity was active from at least as early as 1530.²⁶ This document contains the annual accounting, the names of the administrative personnel, and the registration of payments to priests for the celebration of masses. In the years between 1530/35 and 1560, the company was managed by a prior, or a minister, a chancellor, and a *canevar*, or treasurer, called to care for the valuables and the administration of the revenues and expenditures of the confraternity and to take account of the members. The names of members testify to the presence of some major families of the borough: Cusa, Molo, Mugiasca, Magoria, and so forth.²⁷ There is no set of rules for the first decades.²⁸ Starting in the 1540s the activities of the confraternity became more intense. In 1549 and 1551, some decisions taken by the congregation of brethren—that normally did not meet at the confraternity's altar but found a suitable place in the little church of Santa Maria dei Cattanei—were noted, sometimes to clarify some points. There seems to have been some controversy about loans that were encouraged so as to avoid begging; the aim was to prevent people from taking advantage of the system, but in order to do so, the loans would have to be endorsed by some of the brothers and a canon, while the priors would have to be responsible for the restitution (by the end of the prior's year in office, 1552). In the end, these had to be prohibited if not for urgent needs (1558).²⁹

There are parallels with the statutes of the confraternity of the SS. Sacramento at the Roman Church of Santa Maria sopra Minerva (1539), to which the

26 This document lacks the first 15 pages. It is thought that the register was inaugurated around 1530–1532. Naturally, the confraternity may have been founded even earlier: Archivio Capitolare Bellinzona (ACap), Fondo Confraternita SS. Sacramento: Libro del tesoriere I, 1535–1561 (henceforth, Libro tesoriere I).

27 From 1547, the register keeps track of movable assets, first the liturgical objects, then, in the following years, secular gifts and valuables that members used to round up revenues: Libro tesoriere I, fols. 96v (liturgical vestments), 149v, 152v (with lists of sold items), and 156v. The insistence on liturgical garments points to the efforts to improve the ceremonial aspects and exalt both the decorum of the mass and the prestige of the confraternity.

28 Except for some decisions written when the chaplain was hired in 1538. He, with the ministers, is also called to give communion to the members on the day of the Corpus Domini: Libro tesoriere I, fol. 22v.

29 For the loans, see Libro tesoriere I, fols. 136v–37r. In 1549 the confraternity decreed that brothers with a specific role, if elected by the majority of the assembly, could not step down from their post (Libro tesoriere I, fol. 119v). Meanwhile, in 1551, the confraternity specified how members were to be appointed for the two-months alms-begging (*la questua*), the way alms should be distributed, the need to collect bequests, and to use the baldachin for the Viaticum. In 1557, the documents note that a meeting should be held every third Sunday of the month.

Bellinzona confraternity may have already been aggregated that same year, as reported by a local historian.³⁰

The Bellinzona confraternity is especially interesting. In 1538 it nominated women as priors for each part of the borough and later, from 1546–47, appointed some other priors as supervisors for the barrels of must or wine (marked with the symbol of the monstrance, or *tabernaculo*) owned by the company. In fact, the company chose a large number of female and male priors, nominated for ten villages around town.³¹ The wine made at harvest time was brought to the town centre to be re-sold. The same priors were also called to distribute financial aid to the poor and disadvantaged. These small sums were taken from the treasury and accurately recorded.³² This charitable activity took place without particular supervision from ecclesiastical authorities. The confraternity fined the priests called to celebrate sung masses for their absences or for forgetting their liturgical garments by reducing their annual wage for each infraction. The chaplain who had to celebrate the Sunday mass at the confraternity altar in the Collegiate Church was subject to the same rules.³³

The sale of wine was matched by that of millet and chestnuts, dry or green. The women or horse-drivers who brought the harvested fruits were often remunerated with small tips. Besides these donations, the confraternity also received monetary gifts, collected in a box that was emptied at irregular intervals (it sometime contained counterfeit coins) and then brought to Milan. On occasion, the confraternity also received gifts of jewels or clothes. Sometimes, these donations involved obligations—for example, the restoration of smaller oratories in the borough, or the periodic lighting of the candles on the altars.³⁴

30 The only documented aggregation is that of 1655, mentioned by Neuroni in 1747 (ADL, VP 66, 26). In the apostolic visit of Bellinzona, only the date of 1535 is mentioned, perhaps derived from the same register: Paolo D'Alessandri, *Atti di S. Carlo* (Locarno: 1909), 364.

31 For the list of priors, mentioned by Gorduno and Arbedo to Camorino: Libro tesoriere I, 78, 83, 93. The same list was remembered in the following years, but less complete.

32 Usually the assistance was given depending on individual cases, but in 1544 all the priors from all the villages, received a few *lire* to help the population, probably in a moment of pestilence or famine. Aid totalling 160 lire was distributed; two thirds were cash and the other third was bread made with millet and rye, probably destined for the population of the borough. The villages received in proportion to their population, or perhaps their poverty; for example, Val Morobbia received twelve lire, ten of which destined to Daro and Pedemonte: Libro tesoriere I, fol. 83r.

33 See the new 1551 re-election: "et ognia volta che se ritroverà che non se deporta bene che sia privo de ditto beneficio et item suo selario": Libro tesoriere I, fol. 142v.

34 For the cross on the little church of Codeborgo, which was restored thanks to a gift by a pious woman: Libro tesoriere I, fol. 114r.

Worship of the Eucharistic was central for the life of the confraternity. This involved expenditures for the oil for the sanctuary lamp and for processional lamps (*lantermoni*), for incense, candles, and baldachin—used for the procession of the Eucharist and for the Viaticum given to the dying. To find high quality materials, one would go to Locarno, Lugano and Roveredo, where a Reformed community was starting up. In Milan, the confraternity bought a missal, now lost, that might have proven the (at least partial) use of the Ambrosian rite in a locality where the old Aquileian rite was still in use.³⁵ This can be explained by the close relationship between Bellinzona and Milan, which despite the Swiss conquest, continued on economic, cultural and even linguistic levels.³⁶ The confraternity made more than the minimum effort expected: they obtained a silver chalice, planets, and then, in 1570, a cope, a banner, and some processional crosses. On the spiritual side, the company took care of the celebration of the Divine Office for the members on the day of Saint Joseph, to whom the altar of the confraternity was co-dedicated.

Special preachers would be invited on Good Friday, often Augustinians from the local convent of San Giovanni. From 1547 they would show to the company and the population the indulgences obtained, particularly those of the jubilee celebrated a few years later. To thank these guests, the confraternity would serve rare types of food.³⁷ The Corpus Domini feast was clearly the central point of the life of the group; on this day they decorated the procession's route with *banderole* (small flags coloured with saffron), and extra lights. In the accounts, there is also a reference to the celebration of the Forty Hours' devotion. The celebration of Christmas mass, often coordinated by the reformed Franciscans (*zoccolanti*) of the convent of Santa Maria delle Grazie (also in Bellinzona), completed the wide range of religious functions celebrated.

The chapel that hosted the confraternity's altar was held in high regard. Several additions to it were made in 1540, and in the following years work was done on the *bradella* (the platform that surrounds the altar) and steps. Some palliums of fabric were acquired. The collegiate church also held a central role

35 From the seventh to the late 16th century the diocese of Como belonged to the Patriarchate of Aquileia and used the its rite, also known as the *ritus patriarchinus* (no longer extant).

36 Libro tesoriere I, fol. 93v. In fact the dialect spoken in the borough was quite different compared to the surrounding villages and testimonies the relations with Milan: Rosanna Zeli, "Il dialetto di Bellinzona e i suoi rapporti con il dialetto milanese," in *Pagine bellinzesi* (Bellinzona: 1978), 197–210.

37 ACap Bellinzona, Fondo Confraternita SS. Sacramento: Libro del tesoriere II, 1574–1795, (poi: Libro tesoriere II), 123 (Marzipan, etc.).

in the confraternity's devotions and was the recipient of donations such as Easter candles, loans, or gifts for the decor and restoration of the building.³⁸

Lastly, the records of the treasurer are a valuable insight into the financial and social life of the borough. This can be seen in confraternity donations for the poor in town (some hospitalised), invalids and foreigners (*todeschi*) who often came from the valleys or from as far as Mendrisio (50 km). Most of the recipients of such assistance were concentrated in the quarters around the borough (Orico, Portone). Confraternal charity extended to the villages of the *pieve* as well, helping out on occasion of fatal falls or when families were faced with great difficulties.³⁹ Help with food provisions, such as butter, meat, is also mentioned, or shoes for the needy. Confraternity members also took care of particular situations, for instance when a young person had a vocation for the religious life, or when a cripple asked for a modest sum to visit the Madonna of Porlezza, or when executed criminals needed burial. A donation was also made to the *scoriati* (flagellants) of Santa Marta. Generally, this generosity with regard to these cases of poverty was limited in 1551, when members decided to help not exclusively through donations, but also, for those who could afford it, with loans on pawn.⁴⁰

From these observations, it is evident that the confraternity of the SS. Sacramento was deeply interwoven with the social fabric of Bellinzona. However, its importance does not limit itself to a micro-history. The confraternity played an essential role in the promotion of the Catholic reformation that was peculiar to the population of this strategic area of the *Corpus Helveticum*. The members' appeal for the residency of the canon and other ecclesiastics in their churches, their diffusion of religious models to the villages, and the decorum of their divine service, were useful instruments in the preservation of this parish from the threatening influence of heterodox ideas of nearby Locarno and Italian Graubünden. It is certainly not a coincidence that from the 1560s onwards, the

38 In 1552, work on the chapel's roof was the order of the day (Libro tesoriere I, fol. 146v), and painting in 1559 (fol. 155v). There are no descriptions of the decorations of the chapel which Carlo Borromeo described as "picta sed tota corrosa" during his visit in 1583. Instead, he liked the altarpiece: D'Alessandri, *Atti*, 365. Regarding the loans and gifts for the works: Libro tesoriere I, fol. 152v, and Giuseppe Pometta, *Briciole di storia bellinzonese. Serie X*, (ed.) Emilio Pometta (Bellinzona: 1977), 471.

39 For example, the death of the three children (*putti*), who are all buried in the confraternity chapel: Libro tesoriere I, fol. 158r.

40 See *supra*, orders of 1551. However, already in 1553, a woman from Castione was given the good sum of 25 lire, "su comisione della confraternita": Libro tesoriere I, fol. 151r. On the historical-economical value, see Francesco Bianchi, "L'economia delle confraternite devozionali laiche: percorsi storiografici e questioni di metodo," in *Studi confraternali: orientamenti, problemi, testimonianze*, (ed.) Marina Gazzini (Florence: 2009), 239–269.

confraternity received a yearly emolument from Catholic authorities and the bailiff, who was alternatively nominated by the Catholic cantons Uri, Schwyz, and Nidwalden.⁴¹ Moreover, for the people of Bellinzona the presence of this confraternity helped with the conservation, and perhaps increase, of the privileged role that distinguished them from the communities of the surrounding areas. Finally, all this happened in a context made difficult by the impending presence of epidemics.⁴²

5 The Impact of Trent

In the accounts for 1561 there is an entry that reads: “Item, for money given to [...] of Daro to go to Como to pick up the statutes (*ordinationi*).”⁴³ This entry does not say much per se, but it can be explained chronologically: in the treasurer’s second register there is an entry that reads “Statutes that must be observed in the holy company of the Most Holy Sacrament confirmed by our Most Reverend Monsignor of Como when he was here on his visit.”⁴⁴ The first nine articles in these “rules” are not dated, nor have any chronological reference, while the tenth and subsequent articles each bear a date of approval ranging from 1562 to 1584. Aside from its importance for a discussion on oral and written “rules” for a confraternity, this entry also helps us understand the importance of Bishop Giovanni Antonio Volpi’s ecclesiastical policies.⁴⁵ We see, in fact, how even before the closing of the Council of Trent, Volpi undertook to examine and confirm local confraternity statutes. Likely inspired from those of the archconfraternity of the Most Holy Sacrament at the church of

41 Since 1500 Bellinzona was ruled by a governor nominated bi-annually by the three cantons of Uri, Schwyz, and Nidwalden in sequence; *Storia della Svizzera italiana. Dal Cinquecento al Settecento*, (ed.) Raffaello Ceschi, (Bellinzona: 2000), 15–44. Generally: Di Filippo Bareggi Claudia, *Le frontiere religiose della Lombardia. Il rinnovamento cattolico nella zona ticinese e retica fra Cinque e Seicento* (Milan: 2002).

42 One should consider the role of the confraternities in the battle against pestilence: the SS. Sacramento looked after Bellinzona in time of plague by providing food to persons in quarantine: Libro tesoriere II, fol. 15v. For the activities of the confraternities of Saint Roch in the second half of the 16th century see Adamoli, *Confraternite*, 1:102–105.

43 “item per dinar dati al [...] di Daro per andar a Como a pilar ordinationi”; Libro tesoriere I, fol. 175v.

44 “Ordinationi che se hanno a observar ne la sancta compagnia del Santissimo Sacramento confirmate de Mons. Reverendisimo nostro di Como quando fu qua in visita.” Libro tesoriere II, unnumb. folio.

45 As of 1558, Giovanni Antonio Volpi was also nuncio for the Swiss; see Annalina Rossi, “Giovanni Antonio Volpi, vescovo di Como (1559–1588),” in *Archivio storico della Diocesi di Como*, 7 (1996): 315–371.

Santa Maria sopra Minerva (or others) in Rome, these new statutes were limited to the essentials, but they outlined the group's significant activities and highlighted the interest of the Curia in Como for this confraternity in such a key region. They reflect "the desire to build new edifices, starting from the materials of an ancient tradition," as would later happen with the pastoral activity of Archbishop Carlo Borromeo.⁴⁶ The presence of Volpi in Bellinzona suggests that a "pre-visit" had taken place as he journeyed to the other side of the Alps into the Catholic parts of Switzerland.

On this matter, it is interesting to compare the 1561 statutes from Bellinzona with those for the entire diocese published in 1568 in Como.⁴⁷ About ten chapters were published, which confirmed the practices already mentioned for Bellinzona, but there were some changes: the members were called to recite ten Our Fathers every day, to take communion frequently and to avoid inviting unworthy companions. In the solemn celebrations, the priests at the service of the brotherhood had to use the cope. The relationship between the clergy and laity remained the same as before, but now it was better guaranteed, and this also thanks to the renewed liturgical prescriptions.⁴⁸

These observations point to a continuity between the Catholic pre-Reformation and the Counter-Reformation phase in their efforts to resolve the principal "abuses" of the past such as the introduction of non-orthodox subject and ideas, insisting on the separation between clergy and laity, etc. On the other hand, they underline the importance of pastoral educational commitment, sacramental practice, a revitalisation of traditional topics, and the introduction of new, but orthodox themes.

Both the statutes of the confraternity of the SS. Sacramento in Bellinzona (1561) and the diocesan statutes in Como (1568) were clear, pragmatic, adaptable to local situations. They underlined what the very communitarian tradition of the southern Alpine parishes had always maintained: the practices inherited from the past (commemoration of the dead, charitable help to the poor, to pilgrims, the sick, and apotropaic cults), a strong sociability, and the quest for indulgences.⁴⁹

46 Danilo Zardin, "Carlo Borromeo e la cultura religiosa della Controriforma," *Schweizerische Zeitschrift für Religions- und Kulturgeschichte*, 103,1 (2009): 58–60. See: Libro tesoriere II, unnumb. folio.

47 *Acta Primae et secundae synodi Dioecesis Comensis de annis MDLXV et MDLXXIX* (Como: 1588), 111–117.

48 For a more extensive comparison see Adamoli, *Confraternite*, 1:65, with a comparison to the successive rules of Charles Borromeo for rural Eucharistic confraternities.

49 Stefano Simiz, "Les confréries face à l'indulgence. Tradition, quête, accueil et effets dans la France de l'est (XV^e–XVIII^e siècle)," in *Confréries et dévotions dans la catholicité moderne*,

6 The New Confraternity of Flagellants

While the impact of the first Tridentine reform was not disruptive, the disciplinary transformation that the confraternity of SS. Sacramento of Bellinzona underwent was definitely more substantial. On 15 August 1583, a new sub-group of professed members was created within the larger confraternity: members of this subgroup had the right to wear a turquoise gown and follow a different set of rules, more demanding and full of devotional proposals. The following year, a new regulation was adopted by the confraternity as a whole that stated that the prior was to be elected only by the “brothers of the gown” (*fratelli dell’abito*), that is, by members of the newly-created subgroup.⁵⁰ The following year, the records mention the purchase of a scourge.⁵¹ It is clear, then that in Bellinzona the confraternity of the SS. Sacramento came under the control of a “restricted company” of about twenty members, some of whom were important figures in town, who practiced a more “disciplined” devotional life.⁵²

The same archival fonds contains another set of “rules” from the years just following the “disciplinisation” of the confraternity.⁵³ It closely follows the regulations in use in the dioceses of Como but, compared to other confraternities in Ticino, like the one in Lugano (1578), this set once again points to an effort to reflect the local situation and tradition.⁵⁴ In Bellinzona the majority of traditional practices from the pre-disciplinisation company are maintained: the obligation to be present when the Viaticum is transported, the celebration of the Office for Saint Joseph, and the Friday celebrations, all of which recall how the group was originally meant to foster devotion among its members and

(eds.) Bernard Dompnier and Paola Vismara (Rome: 2008), 104, and, on a local level, Paola Vismara, “La vita religiosa,” in *Il Ticino medievale* (Locarno: 2008), 366–371.

50 Libro tesoriere II, unnumb. folio.

51 Libro tesoriere II, fol. 125v.

52 Data from the Libro tesoriere II can be compared with the register of professed brothers. The former gives the priors from 1574 to 1585, the latter the names of the “Fratelli con l’abito”: ACap Bellinzona, Fondo Confraternita SS. Sacramento, Libro degli ufficiali, 1584–1722. In a way, the “fratelli dell’abito” recall the *stretta* (or restricted subgroup) in Tuscan confraternities; for the Florentine case, see Konrad Eisenbichler, *The Boys of the Archangel Raphael: A Youth Confraternity in Florence, 1411–1785* (Toronto: 1998), 74–77.

53 By “disciplinisation” we mean the resumption by a confraternity of the major characteristics of a company of *disciplinati* (flagellants), including the gown, separate oratories for men and women, a strong devotional proposal, and the practice of self-flagellation—a practice attested in Swiss-Italian regions until 1680: Danilo Zardin, “Le confraternite in Italia settentrionale fra XV e XVIII secolo,” in *Società e Storia* (Milan: 1987), 81–137, and Luigi Zanzi, *Sacri monti e dintorni* (Milan: 2005), 507–518.

54 ACap Bellinzona, Fondo Confraternita SS. Sacramento, Regole della confraternita del SS. Sacramento, fine XVI secolo (manuscript), and, for Lugano: Adamoli, *Confraternite*, 1:364.

not necessarily among regular worshippers in the parish. For this reason, the confraternity was never moved to the high altar, but rather left to its own side altar. This is an important detail in a period when visiting bishops insisted on the centralisation of the rite around the main altar.⁵⁵ Also notable were the insistence on discipline, penalties for moral lapses for the brothers, the novitiate for new members, prayers to promote good elections for priors, and other practices drawn from particularly prestigious ancient flagellant traditions; all of these were meant to gain an honourable place for the confraternity in the devotional (and social) panorama of the town.⁵⁶ In spite of all of this and even after the transformation of the company into a flagellant-style sodality, the confraternity remained useful for the entire parish and regional (*pieve*) community because of the presence of the arch-priest and the canons at the confraternity's Good Friday service, and the assumption that members would have taken communion during the Easter celebration in the collegiate church.⁵⁷

On this matter, it is necessary to ask why, at that moment, the confraternity went through this transformation. The cause is likely the founding of a third confraternity in Bellinzona, this time dedicated to Saint Roch, which, immediately after its creation in July 1583, adapted a flagellant model and a gown, thereby gaining a prestigious place in processions right after the ancient company of Santa Marta, and before the ancient—but without a gown—company of the SS. Sacramento, as determined by Pope Gregory XIII's regulations of 25 July 1583.⁵⁸ By 15 August of that year, a month after the founding of the new confraternity of San Rocco, the members of the SS. Sacramento adapted a new uniform and started a long diatribe against San Rocco. Not even the arrival of Cardinal Carlo Borromeo helped to calm the waters; in December 1583, the cardinal established that both confraternities would have to participate in general services and/or those ordered by the bishop. He furthermore decreed that San Rocco would have priority, except in Eucharistic processions (where the place of honour would have been taken by the members of the Corpus Domini). Both confraternities also wanted to have indulgences, a fact that should be seen through the lens of ruthless competition. The two groups would once

55 Angelo Torre, *Il consumo di devozioni* (Venice: 1995), 278.

56 On the influence of the Santa Marta confraternity over the SS. Sacramento see Pometta, *Briciole*, 464–468.

57 The relationship between the internal life of the confraternity and the service to the collegiate church of Sts Peter and Stephen, however, was not always exemplary as evident in the complaints of Bishop Filippo Archinti in his pastoral visit of 1597; see Adamoli, *Confraternite*, 1:114.

58 See the Apostolic Constitution *Exposcit pastoralis*, Gregory XIII, 25 July 1583, cited in *Acta Apostolicae Sedis, Commentarium Officiale*, VIII–8 (Rome: 1916), 120–131.

again have clashed had they been forced to coexist in the church of Santa Maria dei Cattanei, so in 1584 the SS. Sacramento moved to a new oratory next to the collegiate church, obtained from a house bought by the members themselves, thus following the model of the Santa Marta sodality.⁵⁹

In the following years, the confraternity of the SS. Sacramento, fuelled by the admission of new members from the principal families of Bellinzona, became committed to substantially improving the high altar in the collegiate church, a decorative operation that involved stucco by Giovanni Battista Lezzeno and Francesco Sala, based on drawings by Bartolomeo Gorla. Between 1601 and 1607 the chapel was equipped with eight prestigious canvases by Camillo Procaccini and his school. Procaccini was seen as the ideal artist, especially for a confraternity close to the “border,” because he produced works of art at the service of the Counter-Reformation and according to the canons promoted by Trent and Cardinal Carlo Borromeo.⁶⁰ The confraternity also decorated its new oratory with a series of works consisting of frescoes and paintings realised in 1640 by Salvatore Pozzi and his workshop, a disciple of Procaccini and Alessandro Gorla, a painter from Bellinzona and active in many areas of the region and the nearby Graubünden territories.⁶¹ The complexity of these decorations is also worth noting; the works presumed knowledge of sophisticated symbolism, biblical episodes, and stories of the Church. These were narrated in the famous devotional manual of *I miracoli del Santissimo Sacramento* by the Reverend Nicola Laghi da Lugano (Venice, 1594).⁶²

7 Between North and South of the Alps

After this brief look on the first decades of the history of the confraternity of the SS. Sacramento in Bellinzona, we now widen our view to examine the influence of this and other flagellant confraternities on the religious and social history of Ticino and beyond the Alps. The model of Eucharistic confraternities developed in the 16th century in the Swiss-Italian area was very flexible and could be applied to many realities, both urban and rural.

In the parishes in the Bellinzona area, the founding, at the end of the 16th century, of local Eucharistic confraternities that followed the flagellant model

59 Adamoli, *Confraternite*, 1:65.

60 Camillo Procaccini (1561–1629): *le sperimentazioni giovanili tra Emilia, Lombardia e Canton Ticino*, (eds.) Daniele Cassinelli and Paolo Vanoli (Cinisello Balsamo: 2007), 235.

61 Maria Foletti Fazioli, *L'oratorio del Corpus Domini a Bellinzona* (Bern: 2017), 8–22.

62 Foletti Fazioli, *L'oratorio*, 12, 19.

of the SS. Sacramento of Bellinzona determined, for the next 250 years at least, the devotional landscape of the region, so much so that in the 17th and 18th non-Eucharistic confraternities struggled to take root in the region because of the strength of Eucharistic confraternities.⁶³ The move towards “disciplinisation,” which was gradually accomplished in part thanks to crucial support from seasonal migration, spread to the entire Swiss-Italian region. At the beginning of the 19th century, almost every parish of the region had a flagellant confraternity, often named after the SS. Sacramento.⁶⁴

This model was transported by Italian bailiffs to various localities in the cantons of central Switzerland. This is not surprising, considering that many confraternities included not only a number of Swiss functionaries, but also traders and emigrants who were members of the southern Alpine confraternities and wished to reproduce their confraternal experiences where they now lived.⁶⁵ In 1719 in Hospental, for example, an *Officiibruderschaft* was erected on this model, complete with gown, that was devoted to the recitation of the Marian Office. In 1754, in Altdorf, a “Bruderschaft zur Beförderung guter Werke” was founded that used the company of San Giovanni Decollato alle Case Rotte of Milan as a model, even in the official nomenclature, though for their gown the brothers chose their cantonal colours.⁶⁶

Naturally, in the Catholic northern Alpine region of Switzerland, some Eucharistic confraternities did not adapt to the model of the Italian-speaking bailiffs. This does not mean that Eucharistic confraternities were not present. For example, in 1635, in Constance, the episcopal headquarters of most of the Catholic German part of Switzerland, the confraternity of the *Allerheiligstes* (Blessed Sacrament) was established based on the Roman model.⁶⁷ In Schwyz, the local confraternity of the *Allerheiligstes* was active from 1624, partly following the ritual for the transport of the Viaticum, with men and young cleric wearing a surplice and a cloak.⁶⁸ The Benedictine abbey of Einsiedeln was also a notable confraternal centre, as the activity of the confraternity of the Rosary reveals. This Marian company supported grand theatrical representation

63 Adamoli, *Confraternite*, 1:162–163.

64 Adamoli, *Confraternite*, 1:299.

65 For the *landvogt* members of Swiss-Italian confraternities see Adamoli, *Confraternite*, 1:262. The phenomenon was not limited to the confederation's representatives: thus in the 1700s, among the brothers of Saint Roch in Lugano there were a number of people from canton Uri.

66 <http://www.bruderschaft-altldorf.ch/downloads/staatsarchivablagegross.pdf>.

67 *Germania Sacra, Das Bistum Konstanz*, 1. *Das Stift St. Stephan in Konstanz*, (ed.) Helmut Maurer (Berlin: 1981), 210–213.

68 Hengler, *Die kirchlichen Bruderschaften*, 22, 197, 201.

of the Baroque era. In the Einsiedeln's conventual church, another confraternity, the one of the *Allerheiligstes*, arose from the aggregation of a previous group dedicated to Saints Maurice and Michael to the archconfraternity of the Blessed Sacrament at St Peter's in Rome. This company gathered members of the four corporations of the surrounding town, which split in 1731, but still reunited during the main Eucharistic celebrations.⁶⁹ The abbey itself was able to foster new communities and colleges, such as the Addolorata (Our Lady of Sorrows), founded by the Benedictines of Einsiedeln in Bellinzona around 1760.⁷⁰

Farther west, in the city of Fribourg there was, from 1652 on, a Eucharistic confraternity restricted to patrician families that was aggregated to the Roman archconfraternity of the Blessed Sacrament. This small Catholic town in the Romandy region is worth further study because of the coexistence of several different confraternal models, the result of a strong presence of Jesuit companies, other religious orders, and a rich medieval confraternal inheritance.⁷¹ The same holds true for Valais, where it would be useful to look closely at the consistency in terms of *sociabilité* of the confraternities of *penitents* present in many parishes. Their history is still unknown, except from some traces of them in the popular memory and the presence of artworks that survived the disappearance of these groups.⁷²

8 New Perspectives

In looking to future research on confraternal devotions, forms, and contents it would be very profitable to consider the Italian/Swiss Alpine area. Not only is this area a meeting place between cultural spheres imbued with pre- and post-Tridentine Catholicism, but also a location rich in elements from the local past yet also fertile ground for new ideas, devotional proposals, and more.

For the Swiss case in particular, one could consider the history of its confraternities by adopting analytical methods used in other countries, thereby breaking down the borders between linguistic areas and dioceses. One could also analyse the pastoral visitations and the role of the nunciature so as to define a geography of Swiss confraternities, or study the role of the main devotional centres and those orders more directly involved with the Counter-Reformation,

69 Henggler, *Die kirchlichen Bruderschaften*, 207.

70 On the confraternity of the Addolorata in Bellinzona, see http://www.klosterarchiv.ch/e-archiv_summarium_detail.php?amtsbuchstabe=X&band=1&fa=X&a=X_I-01&start=45 (Accessed: 6 January 2018).

71 Macherel—Steinauer, *L'État de Ciel*, 212–217.

72 For example, Michel Gaillard, *Une oeuvre d'Edouard Vallet: procession de pénitents blancs* (Sion: 1988), 31.

such as the Jesuits and Capuchins. What relationship did medieval confraternities in the boroughs, towns and rural areas have with the major players of the Catholic Reformation in Switzerland? What was their relationship with the secular clergy, with the local collegiate chapters, and above all with the political, financial, and social élites? And finally, what was the relationship between the “Swiss lords” and their subjects or between the élites and the rest of the population? Were confraternities open or exclusive?⁷³ In what way did confraternities build the ritual space and contribute to the accumulation and distribution of social capital of families, territories, and social groups?⁷⁴ One should not forget the cultural and artistic production that emanated from the confraternities. If in the Italian parts of Switzerland the corporations, the “arts,” are only partially mentioned in the life of the boroughs, confraternities were however important protagonists for the *sociabilité* of the Ancient regime. How did this relationship develop north of the Alps? And, surely, how did the Protestant Reformation influence the lives of those confraternities that survived the great confrontations of the 16th century?

All these points should not only prompt curiosity into Swiss confraternities, but also raise interest in possible comparisons between the areas that remained within the Helvetian confederacy after the French Revolution, and those territories where the French and Austrian suppressions tried to destroy, or at least diminish, the weight of these social groups. Research into these questions may help to overcome the “myths of decadence” that have coloured our understanding of confraternities between the 15th and 18th centuries.⁷⁵ New ways to approach the immense archival patrimony produced in more than a thousand years of confraternal life in Switzerland can open the way to a first “History of confraternities in Switzerland.”

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- 73 Marina Gazzini, “Solidarity and Brotherhood in Medieval Italian Confraternities: A Way of Inclusion or Exclusion?,” *Reti Medievali Rivista*, 13.2 (2012): 109–120.
 - 74 Nicholas Terpstra, “De-institutionalizing Confraternity Studies: Fraternalism and Social Capital in Cross-Cultural Contexts,” in *Early Modern Confraternities in Europe and the Americas*, (eds.) Christopher Black and Pamela Gravestock (Aldershot: 2006), 264–283.
 - 75 Danilo Zardin, “Controriforma, Riforma cattolica, cattolicesimo moderno: conflitti di interpretazione,” in *Identità italiana e cattolicesimo*, (ed.) Cesare Mozzarelli (Rome: 2003), 289–309; Forster, *Catholic Revival*, 2–3.

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The Development of Confraternities in Central Europe in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Period

Beata Wojciechowska

1 Introduction

In medieval and early modern Central Europe—by which we mean Bohemia (with Silesia, a Bohemian fief since the 14th century), Poland, and the lands of the Teutonic Order in Prussia—there were some significant factors that characterised religious life in these vast borderlands of Western Christianity. For one, urbanisation was lagging behind its counterpart in Western Europe, the territory was relatively undeveloped, and what urban development was present was often a factor of German colonisation. There were not many large cities, but many small urban centres whose inhabitants, for the most part, lived off the land.¹ The density of the parish network was very uneven. Bohemia offered the best conditions for regular participation in religious worship in churches, especially in the archdeaconry of Prague.² The situation was comparable in some deaneries of the diocese of Wrocław (Breslau). In the Kingdom of Poland, apart from large urban centres, there were many multi-village parishes.³ In the Teutonic State, the parish network was dense in the diocese of Pomerania, sparser in the diocese of Warmia (Ermland) and sparsest in the diocese of Samland (Samland).⁴ This situation had an impact on the development

1 Henryk Samsonowicz, Maria Bogucka, *Dzieje miast i mieszczaństwa w Polsce przedrozbiorowej* [*History of Towns and Townspeople in pre-Partition Poland*] (Wrocław: 1986), 124–167.

2 Zdeňka Hledíková, “Církev v českých zemích na přelomu 14. a 15. století” [“Church on the Czech Soil at the Turn of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries”], in *Jan Hus na přelomu tisíciletí* [*Jan Hus at the Turn of the Millennium*], (eds.) Miloš Drda, František J. Holeček, Zdeněk Vybíral, Husitský Tábor Supplementum 1 (Tábor: 2001), 35–58.

3 Jerzy Kłoczowski, *Młodsza Europa* [*Younger Europe*] (Warsaw: 2003), 249–257; Eugeniusz Wiśniowski, *Parafie w średniowiecznej Polsce. Struktura i funkcje społeczne* [*Parishes in Medieval Poland. Structure and Social Functions*] (Lublin: 2004), 8–10.

4 Andrzej Radziwiński, “Podziały kościelne w Prusach” [“Church Divisions in Prussia”], in *Zakon krzyżacki w Prusach i Inflantach. Podziały administracyjne i kościelne w XIII–XVI wieku* [*The Teutonic Order in Prussia and Livonia: The Political and Ecclesiastical Structures in the*

of lay religious life, which flourished mostly in large cities and then spread to towns and villages. Bohemia led the way and quickly lost its characteristics as a peripheral area. What most facilitated its adoption of new cultural, religious, and ritual patterns was its position as part of the Holy Roman Empire in the 14th century.⁵

The formation of confraternities in Central Europe should be associated with the willingness of the faithful to participate in different forms of religious worship. Religious currents from Western Europe brought new opportunities for wider participation in religious life and became particularly popular in urban communities.

The aim of this article is to present and analyse the spread, religiosity, and local significance of confraternities in Bohemia, Poland, and in the lands of the Teutonic Order during the Middle Ages and the early modern era. This is not an easy task: as the first subsection will reveal, sources related to the founding and the activities of confraternities are often laconic and scattered. They come primarily from civic and ecclesiastical records. As the second subsection points out, these sources reveal that the earliest confraternities to be established in medieval Poland had charitable aims, but also that, starting in the 14th century, new types of lay religious associations began to appear such as confraternities of priests, literary confraternities dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary, guild confraternities, confraternities of cannoneers (*kurkowe*),⁶ and confraternities dedicated to particular saints. In the Middle Ages, confraternities were established in large and medium-sized cities and became an integral part of the urban life. After the Council of Trent their popularity increased and they began to spread to small towns and villages.

The third and fourth section of this article will examine confraternal piety and the role confraternities in medieval and early modern Poland. Their primary purpose was to care for members' funerals and memorial services for their souls. They united members under the eschatological dimension of human existence, influenced religious knowledge and awareness, and encouraged urban charity. Members of confraternities knew the fundamentals of the faith. They recited a certain number of Our Fathers and Hail Marys as part of their prayer routine. Confraternities had altars and chapels, often located in

Thirteenth to Sixteenth Centuries], (eds.) Roman Czaja, Andrzej Radziwiński (Toruń: 2013), 107–128; Marian Biskup, "Parafie w państwie krzyżackim" ["Parishes in the Teutonic State"], in *Zakon krzyżacki w Prusach i Inflantach*, 129–151.

5 Anna Paner, *Luksemburgowie w Czechach: historia polityczna ziem czeskich w latach 1310–1437* [*The House of Luxembourg in Bohemia: Political History of the Czech Lands 1310–1437*] (Gdańsk: 2004), 35–151.

6 These were confraternities organized by citizens, usually craftsmen, who, in the event of siege, were responsible for defending a particular turret or gate along the city walls.

church aisles, dedicated to various patrons. They were generously supported by donors who, most often, came from the nobility and the urban elite. And they served to raise the splendour of the religious ritual. Confraternities thus played an important role not only in forming and organizing the religiosity of townspeople, but also in the Christianisation of various groups of the Eastern European population.

2 Sources

Religious confraternities, and related craft guilds, are very important elements of socio-religious history. As such, they attract a great deal of interest from researchers, especially historians of Church and religion. Though an important field of research, it still appears to be seen as a side issue or a complementary thread to the characteristics of various institutions and units of secular and Church administration (parishes, dioceses, convents, monasteries, religious provinces, etc.), so it rarely appears as a primary object of study. Primary source information for the study of confraternities is scattered and found in founding documents, indulgences granted, convent records, city records, official documents, economic documentation of fraternal and monastic orders, church chronicles, confraternity prayer books, and visitation records.⁷ The founding documents established the rules on which the confraternity was to operate, the manner of electing officers and assessing the competence of the elders, the duties and rights of members, the relationship with other members or with the Church. The language used was fairly generic in order to allow for the adoption of various organisational forms. The documents that granted indulgences to confraternities contained a list of duties for members to fulfil. The list was usually placed in the founding document or in the act that approved the statutes. The faithful could obtain an indulgence by attending masses in the confraternity and by supporting members of the confraternity. Indulgences gave members an opportunity to secure spiritual benefits for the future. A characteristic feature of these documents was the personal listing of members of the confraternity at the time of its founding.⁸ The establishment and development of various confraternities and religious associations was an expression

7 Bolesław Kumor, "Kościelne stowarzyszenia świeckich na ziemiach polskich w okresie przedrozbiorowym" ["Church Associations of Lay People on Polish Soil in the Pre-Partition Period"], *Prawo Kanoniczne* 10 (1967): 289–355; Eugeniusz Wiśniowski, "Bractwa religijne na ziemiach polskich w średniowieczu" ["Religious Confraternities on Polish Soil in the Middle Ages"], *Roczniki Humanistyczne* 17 (1969): 51–81.

8 W. Szymborski, *Odpusty w Polsce średniowiecznej* [*Indulgences in Medieval Poland*] (Kraków: 2011), 73.

of new trends and processes within the structures of the universal Church, and the Churches of Bohemia, Poland, and the Teutonic State.

3 Formation and Development of Confraternities

In the Middle Ages and Early Modern Period, confraternities spread unequally in Bohemia, Poland, and the lands of the Teutonic Order. This was a result of the different dynamics of development in the parish network and their social and religious reality, but also of the different devotional practices and piety of the people in these lands. In spite of these differences, confraternities played an important role in the lives of all rural and urban parishes.

The earliest confraternities in Bohemia and Poland appeared in the 1230s and followed western models. In the lands of the Teutonic Order they came into existence in the first half of the 14th century. They specialised in running hospitals and carrying out charitable works. In Bohemia, the first hospital confraternities were inspired by Agnieszka Przemyslidowna (1211–1282), daughter of King Ottokar I of Bohemia (r. 1198–1230), co-founder of the cloister of Poor Clares in Prague in 1233.⁹

The first records we have that refer to confraternities of craftsmen and of merchants date from the 1310s. In matters dealing with their craft and trade, these groups were under the authority of the city government, but were independent of it when it came to religious matters.¹⁰ That is because their relation to the Church was different. The clergy benefited financially from guild chapels and altars, where they also provided services, but also in terms of prestige—a church with more confraternities meeting in its chapels enjoyed greater prestige among the population. The clergy thus gave guilds an opportunity to fulfil their members' devotional needs, but it also extended its influence on them. Confraternity members participated in corporate religious events and in organisational meetings. They were present at weekly masses, took part in processions, and observed Church and confraternity holidays. They were obliged to attend the funerals of their brethren and to participate in solemn remembrances for the souls of deceased members and their families.

9 Jaroslav V. Polc, *Svěťice Anežka Přemyslovna* [*Saint Agnes Przemyslidowna*] (Prague: 1989), 41–43.

10 Hana Pátková, *Bratrstvie ke cti Božie. Poznámky ke kultovní činnosti bratrstev a cechů ve středověkých Čechách* [*Confraternities in the Honour of God. Comments on the Cult Activities of Confraternities and Guilds in Medieval Bohemia*] (Prague: 2000), 8–15.

In the 14th century, new types of religious communities began to appear: canonical confraternities, confraternities of the lower clergy, and confraternities of rural priests. The confraternity of Corpus Christi, for example, was founded at the Cistercian monastery in Sedlec, near Kutna Hora (Kuttenberg) in 1384. Confraternities of the Blessed Virgin Mary appeared in the late 14th century. Hana Pátková noted seven active confraternities in Prague in the pre-Hussite period.¹¹ The first of these was founded in 1334, but we do not know what sort of confraternity it was; we do know, however, that four of these founded in the years 1327–1390 were clerical confraternities. In 1382, there was the confraternity of the Body and Blood of the Lord, associated with the royal court and the university, at the homonymous chapel in the New Town of Prague.¹² The only burgher's confraternity in Prague, first mentioned in 1405, was associated with the altar of the Body and Blood of the Lord in the church of St. Leonard.

3.1 *Bohemia*

In Bohemia, during the Hussite period (1430s–early 1500s), that is, before the appearance and expansion of the Lutheran Reformation, there were two religious groups that considered themselves part of the Church. The larger group were the Utraquists (Calixtines), the smaller one the Catholics. Catholics were important in the southern and north-western regions and in cities. Many large cities such as Prague, Kutna Hora, and Hradec Kralove (Königgrätz) belonged to the Utraquists camp, but that is just a coincidence—there is no direct link between the size of a city and the religious orientation of its inhabitants. In cities where the Utraquists were the majority, the minority was Roman Catholic, and vice versa. Both groups were actively engaged in religion through forms and expressions that continued to be practiced without much change.¹³ The statutes of Hussite guilds of craftsmen and merchants required the newly admitted members to receive Holy Communion in two forms, however masses for the dead and annual guild services remained as they had been before Jan Hus. The guilds that worshiped the Blessed Virgin Mary and the saints in the pre-Hussite period, continued to do so after moving to the Utraquists side. The

11 Pátková, *Bratrstvie*, 117–118.

12 Miroslav Polívka, “K šíření husitství v Praze. Bratrstvo a kaple Božího těla na Novém Městě pražském v předhusitské době” [“On the Spread of Hussitism in Prague. The Confraternity and Chapel of Corpus Christi in the New Town of Prague in the Pre-Hussite Period”] *Folia historica bohemia* 5 (1983): 95–118.

13 Hana Pátková, “Bractwa w czeskich miastach katolickich i utrakwistycznych” [“Confraternities in Catholic and Utraquist Cities in Bohemia”] in *Ecclesia et civitas. Kościół i życie religijne w mieście średniowiecznym* [*Ecclesia et Civitas. The Church and Religious Life in the Medieval Town*], (eds.) Halina Manikowska, Hanna Zaremska, (Warsaw: 2002), 217–222.

same was true of Catholic guilds, which also continued their traditional practices in spite of the religious divide. By the beginning of the 16th century, the importance of denominational differences ceased to exist as Utraquist guilds accepted Catholic craftsmen as members, and vice versa. It seems, then, that in Bohemia economic and social bonds were stronger than religious affiliation.¹⁴

In the 1460s, in both Catholic and Utraquist cities, a new category of religious associations appeared alongside religious confraternities, namely literary confraternities. The first signs of their activity come from the town of Loket (Elbogen) in western Bohemia. At the end of the 15th century, literary confraternities were present in Catholic and Utraquist cities, even very small ones such as Zlutice (Luditz), Usti nad Labem (Aussig), Kourim (Kaurim), Chrudim, and Litomysl (Leitomischl). In Prague, there were three literary confraternities, composed mainly of lay people, that graced church services with their singing. Members worshiped the Blessed Virgin Mary and sang during *matuty*, that is, during morning Marian masses. Such associations encouraged the participation of the laity in religious observances and contributed to the development of choirs.¹⁵

Confraternities of the Rosary emerged in the 1480s in Catholic circles in the northern and north-western Bohemia. They are recorded in Usti nad Labem, Tepla (Töpel) and Kadan (Kaaßen). This confraternal model did not, however, attract the interest of Utraquists.

At the beginning of the 16th century, confraternities of St. Anne became popular in the southern and south-western Bohemia: in Cesky Krumlov (Böhmisch Krumau) in 1512, in Horšovský Týn (Bischofteinitz) around 1511, and Blatná in 1518. Although Utraquists also worshiped St. Anne, mother of Mary, they did not develop Marian confraternities. There were also a few confraternities of St. James located along roads and in peripheral regions of the country. Members of such a confraternity, founded in 1498 in Pilsen, had been pilgrims to the shrine of St James of Compostela.¹⁶

The transition to Utraquism did not result in the disappearance of confraternities or the loss of their religious character. Utraquist communities had a rather conservative approach to the new forms of devotion connected with the saints or the Blessed Virgin Mary, but were more open to rituals associated

14 Hana Pátková, "Brotherhoods in Medieval Bohemia from the Hussite Wars to the (Lutheran) Reformation" in *Bractwa religijne w średniowieczu i w okresie nowożytnym (do końca XVIII wieku)* [*Religious Confraternities in the Middle Ages and the Modern Era (until the End of the Eighteenth Century)*], (eds.) Dominika Burdzy, Beata Wojciechowska, (Kielce: 2014), 69–73.

15 Pátková, *Bratrstvie*, 36–42.

16 Pátková, *Bratrstvie*, 24–35.

with the worship of Jesus Christ, such as Eucharistic processions, very common in both Catholic and Utraquist circles. In Catholic cities, confraternities underwent changes similar to those in other Central European countries.

3.2 *Kingdom of Poland*

In Poland, the earliest confraternal communities appeared in the diocese of Wrocław in Silesia. The first we find in the records was a hospital confraternity founded in 1245 that took care of leper women in Sroda Slaska (Neumarkt in Schlesien). Five years later a similar confraternity was established in Ziebice (Münsterberg), then, before 1261, in Bolesławiec (Bunzlau), and in the 1290s in Bolkow (Bolkenhain). By the end of the 14th century, forty-three confraternal hospitals were active in Silesia, but by then they had been taken over by convents and the confraternities that ran them had adopted conventual rules.¹⁷

An important role was played by confraternities of the Holy Spirit. Their members often had to visit the sick in hospital, serve them, search the streets for the homeless and bring them to the hospital, help pilgrims, attend funerals of their members and patients of the hospital. Male members were obliged to collect money for the hospital. Such associations were also present at hospitals in Pomerania and Prussia. In general, Bohemian and Polish hospital confraternities could not stand the competition from convents that engaged in charitable works and either ceased to exist or were taken over by them.¹⁸

In the 14th century confraternities of the Blessed Virgin Mary appeared in Silesia. One was founded in Raciborz (Ratibor) in 1343, another as a hospital confraternity in Prusice (Prausnitz) in 1347, and two confraternities in the years 1372–1410, a confraternity of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Glogow and of the Immaculate Conception in Nysa. The most intensive development of confraternities in Silesia took place in the 15th century; the following century the dynamics weakened, but did not disappear, this despite the strong influence of the Reformation on the territory.¹⁹

In the 14th century in the diocese of Krakow, the largest in Poland, confraternities began to appear in the major churches of the urban area, that is in the districts of Kazimierz and Kleparz. As early as 1342–1347, the confraternity

17 Marian Surdacki, "Bractwa charytatywne w Polsce w XIII–XVIII wieku" ["Charitable Confraternities in Poland from the Thirteenth to Eighteenth Centuries"], in *Bractwa religijne w średniowieczu*, 140–141.

18 Jerzy Flaga, *Bractwa religijne w Rzeczypospolitej* [*Religious Confraternities in Rzeczypospolita*], (Lublin: 2004), 124–125, 587.

19 Władysław Bochnak, *Religijne stowarzyszenia i bractwa katolików świeckich w diecezji wrocławskiej (od XVI do 1810 r.)* [*Religious Associations and Confraternities of Lay Catholics in the Diocese of Wrocław (from the Sixteenth Century to 1810)*], (Wrocław: 1983), 90–107.

of the Most Holy Sacrament (Corpus Christi) was established at the newly erected parish church of Corpus Christi in Kazimierz. In 1347, the confraternity received a forty-day indulgence and a year later it was approved by Bodzanta of Kosowice, bishop of Krakow (r. 1348–1366). Its members were clerics and lay people. In the 15th century, the confraternity changed its dedication to the Blessed Virgin Mary and thus became a Marian confraternity.²⁰

The founding date for the second Krakow confraternity, the confraternity of the Blessed Virgin Mary at St. Mary's church (the church of Our Lady Assumed into Heaven), is difficult to determine. The original founding privilege has not survived and the date was not recorded in the sources. We do know that it was confirmed in 1383 and approved in 1411 by Jan Rzeszowski, vicar general of Krakow, as a confraternity for clergy and laity of both sexes. Rzeszowski approved its statutes on behalf of Piotr Wysz Radolinski, bishop of Krakow (r. 1392–1414) and removed the confraternity from under the authority of the local parish priest, provided it did not violate the priest's rights. The prolonged delay in the approval of the confraternity could have been a result of the conflict between the bishop and the city council of Krakow over their patronage of St. Mary's church. The confraternity seemed to have sided with the city council; in fact, it may even have been founded specifically to strengthen the council's arm in its conflict against the bishop. The confraternity soon became an exceptionally prestigious organisation because of the social position of its members and the importance of the centrally located church of St. Mary where it met. Members came mainly from the Krakow elite and were land owners, councillors, coiners, salt mine supervisors (*żupnik*), mayors (*wójt*), assessors, wealthy merchants, and guild elders. At the same time, there were also many craftsmen, servants, and poor people in the organisation. This illustrates the openness of the community that gathered both patricians and commoners for Saturday masses and Marian holidays and gave them a sense of Christian unity and brotherhood.²¹ In 1404, Bishop Piotr Wysz Radolinski approved a second confraternity dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary, this one at the cemetery chapel of St. Barbara that had been built in 1394–1402 next to St. Mary's church.²²

20 Hanna Zaremska, *Bractwa w średniowiecznym Krakowie. Studium form społecznych życia religijnego* [Confraternities in Medieval Krakow. A Study of Social Forms of Religious Life], (Warsaw: 1977), 85–87, 89.

21 Zaremska, *Bractwa*, 48, 106. Jerzy Rajman, "Unsere liebe Fraue. Wspólnota miasta i kościoła w Krakowie w XIV wieku" [Unsere liebe Fraue. Community of Town and Church in Krakow in the Fourteenth Century], in *Średniowiecze polskie i powszechne* 4, [Polish and World Middle Ages], (eds.) Jerzy Sperka and Bożena Czwojdrak (Katowice: 2012), 150–201.

22 Jerzy Paszenda, *Kościół św. Barbary w Krakowie z domem zakonnym księży jezuitów. Historia i architektura* [The Church of St. Barbara and the Jesuit Monastery in Krakow. History and Architecture], (Krakow: 1895), 23–28.

Little is known about the confraternity of St. Ursula and the Eleven Thousand Virgins, founded a few years before 1387 at the parish church of St. Stephen in Krakow. Its sources provide more information starting in the 16th century. In 1403, the confraternity of Poles appeared at the church of St. Catherine of the Order of Saint Augustine in Kazimierz, and in 1410, the confraternity of St. Sophia at the church of St. Mark that belonged to the Canons Regular of Penance. A later spurt in confraternities in Krakow and its diocese came at the time of Bishop Zbigniew Olesnicki (r. 1423–1455).²³

In order to revive the religious life in his diocese, Bishop Olesnicki approved the already existing confraternities, granted them indulgences, and, in 1433, founded a new one, the confraternity of the Poor at the parish church of All Saints in Krakow. Indeed, two poor people were among its first members. Bishop Olesnicki also erected a confraternity associated with the Hungarian chapel at the church of St. Francis of Assisi in Krakow, first recorded in 1447, and before 1456 he erected the confraternity of the Holy Spirit at the parish church of the Holy Cross that belonged to the Order of the Holy Spirit. In 1540–1543, the latter confraternity registered 656 people, mostly craftsmen's families, but also priests, nobility, members of the court, and even poor people. There was a great predominance of women, some of whom served as assistants in the order's hospital. The confraternity's special concern was to help the poor, the sick, the abandoned, and orphaned children.

Sources confirm the presence of the following confraternities in Krakow in the mid-15th century: a confraternity of farmers at the parish church of St. Michael the Archangel and St. Stanislaus Bishop and Martyr at Skalka, known from the 1599 visitation records; the confraternity of Poles at the church of St. Nicholas in Krakow (recorded in 1461); and the confraternity of the Poor at the church of St. James in Kazimierz. The first confraternity in Kleparz was founded at the beginning of the 16th century; this was the confraternity of Christ's Poverty at the collegiate church of St. Florian, established in 1501.²⁴

Confraternities of the poor were involved in social charity. Designed for the poor of the lowest social classes, they made it easier for the clergy to penetrate the community of beggars and provide care and supervision. *Fraternitas pauperum* was a form of acceptance of the idea of poverty understood as a virtue. The case of Krakow confraternities of the poor, especially the confraternity at the church of St. Florian in Kleparz, indicates that their social structure was partly elite. Among the members who joined the confraternity between 1501 and 1550 there were craftsmen, guild members, and city officials. The poor

23 Zaremska, *Bractwa*, 49–55, 79–80.

24 Wiśniowski, *Bractwa*, 63. Zaremska, *Bractwa*, 80–84, 92–93.

were by far a minority.²⁵ However, not all confraternities of the poor were so exclusive. The limited participation of the poor in such confraternities resulted from guild statutes and regulations.

The admission of new members took place at gatherings called *schadzki*. In order to be accepted the candidate had to pay a registration fee. The poor and novices from the lower social strata were often released from fees on account of their low material wealth. Members were obliged to cherish poverty and support the truly poor and sick patients in the confraternity's hospitals and shelters. All revenues were deposited in the confraternal box. Contributions and alms collected by beggars were supplemented with small monetary donations from various benefactors who were not members of the confraternity.²⁶

Confraternities exercised complete control over the life of every beggar in the city, regulated their beats and begging procedures, and supervised their behaviour. The goals and tasks of members of confraternities of the poor were different for the two groups that comprised the sodality; poor members were the recipients of the aid organised by their wealthier confrères, while those who were better well off were obliged to show mercy and support for their less fortunate brothers.

Until the beginning of the 15th century, in the entire Krakow area, confraternities were established only at parish churches. The first Krakow confraternities were founded by the bishops and the city council. The non-parish confraternities founded at conventual churches began to appear only at the beginning of the 15th century, the first at the initiative of the Order of Saint Augustine.

In Sandomierz, the second largest city in the diocese of Krakow, six confraternities were established before the Council of Trent: the Great Literary Confraternity, the confraternity of St. Anne and the confraternity of the Poor (at St. Peter's Church), the confraternity of Vicars (at the collegiate church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary), the confraternity of the Poor (at St. Paul's Church), and the confraternity of the Holy Spirit (at the church of the Order of the Holy Spirit). By the end of the 16th century, the Dominicans became active and, in 1597, founded the confraternity of the Rosary in the Dominican convent of St. James. The literary confraternity of the Blessed Virgin Mary was founded at St. Peter's Church by the townspeople of Sandomierz at the end of the 14th century and received its foundation document in 1402. Its existence in

25 Zaremska, *Bractwa*, 92–98.

26 Zaremska, *Bractwa*, 44–64. Jerzy Flaga, "Rekrutacja do bractw religijnych w XVII i XVIII wieku na przykładzie archidiaconatu lubelskiego" ["Admission to Religious Confraternities in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries. The Case of the Lublin Archdeaconry"], *Roczniki Humanistyczne* 35 (1987): 101–114.

the 15th and 16th centuries is confirmed only by the indulgences and privileges it received from the bishops of Krakow Zbigniew Olesnicki (in 1441 and 1455) and Jerzy Radziwill (1595). Starting in 1466, there was also a confraternity of St. Anne at St. Peter's Church; it had devotional goals and was described as a confraternity of brewers (1551). In the second half of the 16th century, the confraternity must have temporarily ceased to exist because in 1593 we come across its foundation act and a confraternal book that give this date as the year of foundation.²⁷

Gradually, more and more confraternities were founded throughout the entire diocese of Krakow. Like those in the city, some were founded as early as the 14th century. In 1349, at the parish church in Bochnia (Salzberg), a literary confraternity was established for educated people who knew Latin. The development of confraternities in the diocese of Krakow was accelerated by Bishop Zbigniew Olesnicki who established confraternities of the poor in the towns of Borzecin, Koprzywnica, Lekawica (1448), Porabka Uszewska, Szczepanow, Wojnicz, Szczurowa, Jadowniki, Skaryszew, and Zarnowiec (Zarnowitz).²⁸ Many confraternities were founded in the southern part of Lesser Poland, in the archdeaconry of Nowy Sacz (Neu Sandez) created by Bishop Olesnicki in 1448. The oldest confraternity in that region was erected by Bishop Piotr Wysz Radolinski in Pilsen in 1410 as a confraternity of priests. Five other confraternities of priests from that area date back to the 15th and early 16th centuries: in Stary Sacz (erected in the first half of the 15th century), Nowy Targ (Neumarkt) (before 1488), Strzyzow (before 1488), Debica (before 1517), and Ropczyce (before 1527).²⁹

It is possible that some of the many literary confraternities in Lesser Poland known from the turn of the 16th and 17th centuries were actually founded in the 15th century. In the provostry of Tarnow, created in 1416, a confraternity

27 Dominika Burdzy, "Bractwa religijne Sandomierza w okresie przedrozbiorowym (XIV–XVIII wiek)" ["Religious Confraternities of Sandomierz in the Pre-Partition Period (14th–18th Centuries)"], *Nasza Przyszłość* 101 (2004): 33–77. Dominika Burdzy, "Bractwo Św. Jakuba, Dominika, Piotra Nowego Męczennika, Tomasza z Akwinu i Wincentego Ferreriusza pod opieką sandomierskich dominikanów w XV–XVI wieku" ["The Confraternity of St. James, St. Dominic, Peter the New Martyr, Aquinas Thomas and Vincent Ferrer Under the Care of Sandomierz Dominicans in the Fifteenth to Sixteenth Centuries"], in *Dominikanie na ziemiach polskich w epoce nowożytnej* [The Dominicans on Polish Soil in the Modern Era] (eds.) Anna Markiewicz, Marek Miławicki OP, *Studia i źródła Dominikańskiego Instytutu Historycznego w Krakowie* 5 (Krakow: 2009), 43–62.

28 Kumor, *Kościelne stowarzyszenia*, 302.

29 Bolesław Kumor, "Archidiaconat sądecki. Opracowanie materiałów źródłowych do Atlasu Historycznego Kościoła w Polsce" ["Archdeaconry of Nowy Sacz. Source Materials for the Historical Atlas of Church in Poland"], *Archiwa, Biblioteki i Muzea Kościelne* 8 (1964): 218, 237, 263.

of the poor was established in Letowice. It is possible that two more confraternities appeared in that century at the collegiate church in Tarnow: the confraternity of Corpus Christi and a literary confraternity (founded in 1400). In the 16th century, before the Council of Trent, four other confraternities were founded in that area: a confraternity of the poor in Dabrowa Tarnowska, possibly the literary confraternity of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Gora Zbylitowska, and the confraternity of knights and cannoneers in Tarnow. They operated until the mid-16th century, after which there is no record of them.³⁰

The oldest confraternity in the archdeaconry of Lublin was the confraternity of the Blessed Virgin Mary (1396) at the church of St. Mary and St. Barbara. In the 15th century three other confraternities appeared in the archdeaconry: two confraternities of farmers in Sienna, approved by Bishop Zbigniew Olesnicki in 1450, and the confraternity of the Poor of St. Catherine of Mount Sinai, approved in 1492. Also in Lublin, a confraternity of priests was created before 1495. A greater development of confraternities in this archdeaconry was seen in the first half of the 16th century: in 1505 a confraternity of the poor at the parish church in Chodel; in 1532 a confraternity of farmers at the church in Pawlowice (Pawlowitz); in 1543 the confraternity of Stanislaus of Szczepanow in Piotrawin; and in 1548 a literary confraternity in Solec.³¹

Before the Council of Trent, confraternities were relatively numerous in the diocese of Poznan (Posen), but the earliest of them, confraternities of priests, appeared only in the 15th century. They were set up at churches where there was no church *collegium* such as chapters or mansionaries. The confraternity of the Poor Priests in Poznan, erected in 1512 by Bishop Jan Lubranski, had its own hospital. At that time, in the diocese of Poznan, the second largest group of confraternities were the nineteen confraternities of the poor. In addition, in the mid-15th century, there were three confraternities of the Blessed Virgin Mary (possibly priests' confraternities): in Poznan, at the church of Mary Magdalene (recorded in 1453), in Wschowa (Fraustadt) (1454), and in Swieciechow (first recorded in 1463). In the diocese of Poznan there were also confraternities of cannoneers: one in Skwierzyna (Schwerin an der Warthe) (first recorded in 1479) and the other in Swiebodzin (Schwiebus) (first recorded in 1517). In

30 Bolesław Kumor, "Prepozytura tarnowska. Opracowanie materiałów źródłowych do Atlasu Historycznego Kościoła w Polsce" ["Prepository of Tarnow. Source Materials for the Historical Atlas of Church in Poland"], *Archiwa, Biblioteki i Muzea Kościelne* 12 (1966): 215, 225, 258–263.

31 Jerzy Flaga, "Bractwa religijne w archidiecezji lubelskiej do początku XVII wieku (1604)" ["Religious Confraternities in the Archdeaconry of Lublin until the Beginning of the Seventeenth Century (1604)"], *Roczniki Humanistyczne* 21 (1973): 154–156.

total, in the pre-Tridentine period, there were about fifty-five confraternities in the diocese of Poznań. Some of them later changed their profile; in the late 16th century, for example, confraternities of priests transformed themselves into literary confraternities.³²

In the eastern part of Poland, where the Church administration (dioceses, parishes, and orders) developed at a later time, confraternities also appeared later. The earliest were created in the eastern lands of the Crown. In the Grand Duchy of Lithuania their development was very much delayed and progressed with the Christianisation of Lithuania. Although in Crown Ruthenia Latin churches had already existed here and there in the earlier period, the proper development of the Roman ecclesiastical organisation came with the establishment of the diocese of Halych in 1367 and of the metropolitan archdiocese of Halych in 1375, which was transferred to Lviv (Lemberg) between 1412–1414. After that, new bishoprics were created and those that had disappeared were restored in Przemyśl (Premissel), Chelm, Lutsk (Lutschesk), Kamieniec Podolski, and Kiev. They were established alongside the Orthodox Church administration that had existed in those areas since the early Middle Ages.³³

In the 16th century, apart from the dioceses of Przemyśl and Chelm, the parish network in the region was still poorly developed, so there were no conditions for a wider development of confraternities. In the 14th century, in the archdiocese of Halice only two confraternities were formed in Lviv, the largest urban and Church community. A literary confraternity was set up at the cathedral and another, probably also a literary confraternity, dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary, at the church of Our Lady of the Snows; both were founded in 1387. Fifteenth-century sources record four more confraternities in Lviv; these were the confraternity of Germans at the church of Our Lady of the Snows, the confraternity of the Poor at the cathedral (first recorded in 1442 and restored in 1597 as *Confraternitas Misericordiae*), the confraternity of Corpus Christi (1457), and the confraternity of the Cord of Saint Francis at the Bernardine Church (recorded in 1464). In 1492, an unknown confraternity was recorded at the cathedral; this was, most probably, a guild confraternity.³⁴ Established

32 Józef Nowacki, *Dzieje archidiecezji poznańskiej*, vol. 2: *Archidiecezja poznańska w granicach historycznych i jej ustrój* [History of the Archdiocese of Poznań, vol. 2: Archdiocese of Poznań within Its Historical Boundaries and Its Organization], (Poznań: 1964), 737–745.

33 Stanisław Litak, *Kościół łaciński w Rzeczypospolitej około 1772 roku: struktury administracyjne* [Latin Church in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth around 1772: Administrative Structures], (Lublin: 1996), 36.

34 Józef Krętosz, *Organizacja archidiecezji lwowskiej obrządku łacińskiego od XV wieku do 1772 roku* [Organization of the Latin Archdiocese of Lviv from the Fifteenth Century to 1772], (Lublin: 1986), 275–276.

in the years 1482–1498, confraternities of the poor operated in small towns throughout the entire archdiocese of Lviv, that is in Dunaiv (Dunajiw), Bruchnal (Ternowyzja), Bibrka, Komarno (Komorn), and Zhydachiv (Schydatschiw). By the end of the 14th century, the first literary confraternity was established in the town of Krosno (Krossen) in the diocese of Przemyśl.³⁵ In the 15th century, six new confraternal associations appeared in the diocese: the confraternity of Corpus Christi in Drohobych (1445), two literary confraternities in Radymno (1446) and in Przemyśl (1494, at the cathedral), possibly another literary confraternity in Sambir (before 1451), the confraternity of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Sanok (before 1473), and a literary confraternity in Mostyska (probably before 1488). In the first half of the 16th century, perhaps even at the end of the 15th, seven new confraternities were founded. Those were, the confraternities of the poor in Przemyśl and Sola (recorded in 1502), a literary confraternity in Nizinkowice (first recorded in 1504), and the confraternity of Corpus Christi at the cathedral in Przemyśl (1543). Sources also confirm the presence of literary confraternities in Zamosc in the diocese of Chelm and in Grodek (now Horodok) in the diocese of Kamieniec.³⁶

The latest confraternities appeared in the least urbanised eastern territories (with the exception of Lviv) that were Christianised at the end of the 14th century or were included in the Latin Church between the 14th and 15th centuries. Until the second half of the 16th century, these were mostly literary confraternities of the Blessed Virgin Mary, of Corpus Christi, and of the Holy Trinity. Confraternities dedicated to a particular saint were rare. On the other hand, confraternities with religious-social and charitable purposes were more developed, especially in Silesia. Those were mainly confraternities of cannoneers (*kurkowe*), often dedicated to Corpus Christi and associated with guilds.

3.3 *Teutonic State*

In West Pomerania, between the 13th and 16th centuries, there were about 185 different confraternal organisations.³⁷ The first appeared in the 13th century, but their development came in the 14th century. At that time they were already present in thirty-six parishes. The earliest were confraternities of priests. In the 14th century, confraternities were founded in: Maszewo (Massow) in

35 Henryk Borcz, "Bractwa religijne w kościołach parafialnych diecezji przemyskiej w okresie przedrozbiorowym" ["Religious Confraternities at the Parish Churches of the Diocese of Przemyśl in the pre-Partition Period"], *Roczniki Teologiczno-Kanoniczne* 28(1981): 77–90.

36 Stanisław Litak, *Bractwa religijne*, 509.

37 Hellmuth Heyden, *Kirchengeschichte Pommerns*, vol. 1 (Köln-Braunsfeld: 1957²), 158–169.

1310, Nowogard (Naugard) in 1325, Szczecin (Stettin) at St. George's Church in 1326, Stargard Szczecinski (Stargard im Pommern) in 1342, Szczecin at the church of St. James in 1347, Gryfice (Greifenberg) in 1350, Trzebiatow (Treptow an der Rega) in 1350, Lobeż (Labes) in 1360, Strzelce (Strelitz) in 1361, Cedynia (Zehden) in 1362, Mieszkowice (Bärwalde in der Neumark) in 1368, Mysliborz (Soldin) in 1399, Koszalin (Köslin) in 1380, and Kolobrzeg (Kolberg) in 1380. Confraternities of Corpus Christi were also founded at that time in: Choszczno (Arnswalde) in 1359, Kolobrzeg (Kolberg) in 1363, Gryfice in 1375, Stargard Szczecinski at St. John's Church in 1382, Swidwin (Schivelbein) in 1389, Koszalin in 1393; a confraternity of the Holy Spirit in Szczecin in 1309; Marian confraternities in Chojna (Königsberg im Neumarkt) in 1399; and confraternities of exiles in: Gryfino i 1327, Chojna (14th century), and Stargard Szczecinski (1363).³⁸

Confraternities also developed in the diocese of Warmia, founded in 1243, and since 1255 part of the newly formed metropolitan archdiocese of Riga. Until the Reformation, they developed in line with those in other dioceses of the Teutonic Order. They reached their peak in the second half of the 14th and the 15th centuries. A number of confraternities were concentrated in the Hanseatic city of Elblag. Starting in 1334, seven different confraternities were established in Elblag in the Old City (at the church of St. Nicholas) and in New City (at the church of the Three Kings). In the first half of the 14th century, two confraternities of Knights of St. George were established in Elblag and Braniewo (Braunsberg in Ostpreußen); similar associations were founded in Artus Courts in the late 14th century.³⁹ Confraternities of cannoneers of Corpus Christi also developed; the first appeared in 1379 in Orneta (Wormditt). Sources also confirm the presence of confraternities of priests in Reszel (Rößel) in 1402 and Braniewo (Braunsberg in Ostpreußen) in 1420. They were called *kalands* because their members met on the first days of the month. A document from 1420 confirms the existence of a Society of St. James that took care of pilgrims. Starting probably as early as in the 15th and 16th centuries, guild confraternities flourished in other cities of the diocese.⁴⁰ In the middle of the 16th century a confraternal crisis struck the diocese of Warmia due to the general decline of Catholic religious life in the wake of the Reformation.

38 Grzegorz Wejman, "Duchowieństwo diecezjalne i zakonne na Pomorzu Zachodnim i ziemi lubuskiej w XIV wieku" ["Diocesan and Monastic Clergy in Western Pomerania and the Lubuskie Region in the Fourteenth Century"], *Studia Gnesnensia* 27(2014): 161–163.

39 Ireneusz Czarciński, *Bractwa w wielkich miastach państwa krzyżackiego w średniowieczu* [*Confraternities in Major Cities of the Teutonic State in the Middle Ages*], (Toruń: 1993), 51–56.

40 Czarciński, *Bractwa w wielkich miastach*, 51, 110–112.

The number of confraternities in the diocese before the Reformation remains unknown. If we look at the area within its borders after 1525, that is, in the territory of the bishop's dominium of Warmia, there were about five confraternities in the 14th century, eighteen in the 15th century, and another eighteen in the 16th century. Taking into account the small area of the diocese (about 78 parishes), one could conclude that in Warmia confraternities developed very dynamically.⁴¹

In the diocese of Chelmno (Kulmhof an der Nehr), created in 1243, confraternities first appeared in the 14th century. Initially, there were confraternities of the poor, of priests, and of Corpus Christi. Confraternities of the poor operated in Toruń (Thorn), Grudziadz (Graudenz), Koscierzyn, probably in Koronowo (Krone an der Brahe), recorded in 1596, and in Tczew (Dirschau), where the chapel of this confraternity is recorded in the 16th century. In 1341, in Hel, the confraternity of the Poor of St. Catherine was erected with the purpose of saving the shipwrecked. Probably between the 14th and the 15th centuries, the confraternity of the Poor of St. Lazarus was established in Tuchola.⁴² Confraternities of priests, very common in the neighbouring archdeaconry of Pomerania, seemed to have been popular in the diocese of Chelmno, as well. The earliest were established in Gdansk (Danzig) as the priests' confraternities at the parish church of the Blessed Virgin Mary: the confraternity of Notaries of St. Dorothy (founded before 1369), the confraternity of the Blessed Virgin Mary (around 1374), and a third, later and unidentified confraternity.⁴³ In Toruń, a confraternity of priests of Corpus Christi was established in 1394 at the parish church of St. John the Baptist and St. John the Apostle, while at the church of St. James a Marian confraternity (1409) and the literary confraternity of the Blessed Virgin Mary (before 1428) were founded. In the archdeaconry of Pomerania only one confraternity of priests was recorded, in Puck (established in the mid-14th century). In the second half of the 16th century, this type of confraternities was disappearing due to the spread of the Reformation in the area. In the 14th century, in the diocese of Chelmno there were two confraternities of Corpus Christi, but by the time the Reformation arrived there was only one left (in Grudziadz).⁴⁴

41 Andrzej Kopiczko, *Ustrój i organizacja diecezji warmińskiej w latach 1525–1772*, [*The Structure and Organization of the Diocese of Warmia in the Years 1525–1772*], (Olsztyn: 1993), 225–239.

42 Czarciński, *Bractwa w wielkich miastach*, 51–57.

43 Stanisław Litak, "Bractwa religijne w Polsce przedrozbiorowej XIII–XVIII wiek. Rozwój i problematyka" ["Religious Confraternities in pre-Partition Poland in the Thirteenth to Eighteenth Centuries. Development and Problems"], *Przegląd Historyczny* 88 (1997): 503.

44 Czarciński, *Bractwa w wielkich miastach*, 38–50.

4 Confraternal Piety

Medieval confraternities were founded mostly in cities that offered favourable conditions for religious worship. The faithful were involved in religious life particularly intensely in large urban centres where diocesan and conventual clergy were present and pastoral care was developed. Members of confraternities felt the need for active participation in the life of the church and were deeply devoted because they desired to reap their reward in the afterlife. Their participation in church and confraternal rituals, as well as their acceptance of particular obligations, must have affected their internal life. The question to answer is whether those communities of the faithful followed new cults, religious ideas, and devotional rituals imposed upon them by the clergy, or whether their piety was shaped by the level of religious life within the urban community. Most probably, the two environments interacted with each other.

Transformations in confraternal piety are visible in the dedications of confraternities. Initially, Christology and the cult of the Divine Persons (Holy Trinity, Holy Spirit) were dominant. The cult of the suffering Christ was present at various devotional levels. The educated faithful meditated on the Passion of the Lord and studied works with motifs of the Passion. Those who took part in the Way of the Cross also contemplated the Passion. Confraternities of Corpus Christi and the Blessed Sacrament were established in Bohemia, Poland and the Teutonic State.⁴⁵ The worship of the Eucharist played a special role in those communities. They took part in processions on Corpus Christi and during its octave. A document from 1347 from the Krakow confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament recorded the faithful who “on the feast of Corpus Christi and its octave, for their devotions took part in prayers and processions” (“in festo Corporis Christi et per octavam causa devotionis, oracionis aut peregrinacionis accesserunt”).⁴⁶ The document also defined the duties that rested on members. Among many pious practices members were also required to participate in the solemn departure of a priest carrying the Viaticum for the sick. The completion of this practice was a condition for obtaining a forty-day indulgence.⁴⁷

Confraternities of the poor were also numerous. The fundamental duty of the brethren was to secure a proper Christian funeral service and burial for the deceased, especially the poor and homeless, and to recite prayers for them. They

45 Stanisław Bylina, *Religijność późnego średniowiecza. Chrześcijaństwo a kultura tradycyjna w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej w XIV–XV w.* [*Piety in the Late Middle Ages. Christianity and Traditional Culture in Central-Eastern Europe in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries*], (Warsaw: 2009), 71–75.

46 Zaremska, *Bractwa*, 150.

47 Zaremska, *Bractwa*, 46–47.

also ministered to the parish church; their members were obliged to guard and clean the building and carry out minor maintenance works. Above all, they were required to take part in religious practices actively and frequently. Failure to fulfil these obligations could result in a financial penalty. Confraternities of the poor were associated with parish churches and only exceptionally with convents or hospitals. Some had their own altar in the church, sometimes even a chapel. Because they were religious associations, they always had a clerical supporter, usually a priest employed at the parish, often the parson. In addition to the supporter, they had a more or less complex board of lay people. The elders, also called seniors, were in charge. Four or more guards were sometimes chosen in order to supervise the beggars.⁴⁸

Literary confraternities, common in Bohemia and Poland, were elite organisations of mostly educated and Latin-literate people who sang Gregorian chants, hymns, and songs during mass. However, not only educated people, but also the illiterate were accepted in their ranks, though their level of education influenced the duties they were assigned. Highly literate members, able to use books, were obliged to sing prayers from hymnals and graduals during the mass, while the less literate or even illiterate members were required to assist in the mass and recite particular prayers according to the statutory requirements. Because of their singing at mass, literary confraternities soon developed into great church choirs that also performed their own compositions. In Bohemia, these confraternities were present both among Catholics and Utraquists. They gathered the municipal elite who then became officers in the confraternity. They also looked after and subsidised parish schools, supported the poor, and engaged in economic activity.⁴⁹

In Central Europe, Marian confraternities were the most numerous. The first and primary duty of their members was to attend the weekly mass in honour of the Virgin Mary. According to the statutes of the confraternity of the Blessed Virgin Mary at the church of St. Mary in Krakow, mass was to be celebrated with the active participation of the congregation. The community was quite affluent and used the services of a cantor, who was paid a fixed quarterly salary, and students from the parish school. They were supported by the brethren who could sing and use prayer books. The other were obliged to recite fifteen Our Fathers, fifteen Hail Marys, and three Apostles' Creeds. The most

48 Surdacki, *Bractwa charytatywne*, 146–49.

49 Bolesław Kumor, "Statuty Bractwa Literackiego Nauki Chrześcijańskiej przy kościele św. Małgorzaty w Nowym Sączu" ["The Statutes of the Literary Confraternity of Christian Teachings at the Church of St. Margaret in Nowy Sącz"], *Archiwa, Biblioteki i Muzea Kościelne* 2 (1961): 353–388. Pátková, *Bratrství*, 36–42.

important of the confraternity's religious practices were the morning masses called *matury*, celebrated on Sundays, and feasts in honour of the Blessed Virgin Mary, as well as during Advent and on Ember days memorial services for the deceased members.⁵⁰

Confraternities of priests, which gathered diocesan priests from the immediate neighbourhood or church districts (most often from deanates), had charitable purposes. In Bohemia, Poland, and the Teutonic State, they developed in the 14th and 15th centuries. Confraternities of priests deepened the piety and integration of the Catholic clergy, provided care, religious and material assistance to the poor members of the community, and guaranteed a worthy funeral and prayers for their souls in the event of death. Their statutes required members to provide mutual assistance in the event of sickness or poverty, and a proper burial. Although they were originally intended as confraternities exclusively for priests, little by little, lay members of both sexes were also accepted.

5 The Role of Confraternities

After the Council of Trent (1545–63), confraternities began to develop quite rapidly in Poland, as they did elsewhere in the Catholic world. Along with old and new religious orders, confraternities became an important factor in Catholic religious renewal. The movement, which sought to embrace the whole of urban and rural society, was legally regulated and controlled, just like any other area of church life. In a bull of 1571, for example, Pope Pius IV forbade the creation of two different confraternities of the Name of Jesus within a single church; in 1575 Pope Gregory XIII extended the ban to other duplicate dedications. In the modern period, the most important document for the development of confraternities was Pope Clement VIII's bull "Quaecumque" (7 December 1604) that introduced a new order in the confraternal movement and marked a turning point in the development of Catholic confraternities. All existing confraternities were to be re-approved by local ordinaries. One of its most important directives allowed religious orders to erect typically conventual confraternities at parish churches.

In Poland, these regulations were introduced by Marcin Szyszkowski, bishop of Krakow (1616–1630), at the 1621 Synod of Krakow, but practice had already preceded formal regulations. In fact, new confraternities had begun to multiply in Poland at the end of the 16th century. Religious orders played a

50 Zaremska, *Bractwa*, 122–123.

primary role in their development to the point that confraternities became an extension of the pastoral activity of the orders. At the turn of the 16th and 17th centuries, they were also promoted by reforming bishops. Their founders and benefactors were bishops, kings, clergy, gentry, and burghers. Only diocesan bishops and superiors of orders (after the approval of the Holy See) possessed the right of erection. Every confraternity also received adequate indulgences given by the pope or bishops by papal indult. Church authorities sought to popularise confraternities and controlled them by visiting parishes, convents, and monasteries every few years.⁵¹

While medieval confraternities were more oriented towards social problems and enjoyed more freedom, post-Tridentine confraternities, which were a manifestation of religious and ecclesiastical renewal, were more devotional and more closely subordinated to ecclesiastical authorities. Though more devotional in scope, they nevertheless seem not to have completely lost their charitable character, especially in relation to their own community; in fact, the primary purpose of some of them was to help those in need.

Confraternities created a specific religious and moral climate, still not well examined by scholars. This climate was not always fully accepted by the Church (hence the conflicts) and differed according to particular types of confraternities and even within single confraternities. Confraternities also developed a rich and little-known religious folklore that began to fade only in the Enlightenment. In general, it seems that from the 17th century every aspect of social life was more or less influenced by confraternities. They provided appropriate forms of religious experience and charity for all men and women and for every social stratum. They developed particularly intensively in cities.

As was the case in Western Europe, the greatest influence on the development of Polish confraternities came from religious orders. The Dominicans promoted confraternities of the Rosary and, along with the Piarists, confraternities of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mercy, (patroness saint of Warsaw since 1651). The Order of Hermits of St. Augustine promoted confraternities of Consolation of the Blessed Virgin Mary (mainly after 1579). Scapular confraternities were a domain of the Carmelites (in Poland since the 14th century) and the Discalced Carmelites (in Poland since 1605). The Bernardines spread the cult of the Immaculate Conception through confraternities of the Immaculate Conception of Our Lady, confraternities of Our Lady of Loreto, confraternities of St. Anne, and soldiers' confraternities of St. Michael the Archangel. Conventual Franciscans and Jesuits sponsored confraternities of the Immaculate Conception and of Our Lady of Loreto. Starting in 1563 (in Poland in 1571), the

51 Litak, *Bractwa religijne*, 510–511.

Jesuits established sodalities⁵² of Our Lady, intended mainly for students, especially those in Jesuit colleges, but also sodalities of craftsmen, gentry, and even the poor. Those sodalities and confraternities had various Marian dedications, usually of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Our Lady of Sorrows, the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

6 Conclusion

In Central Europe, religious confraternities were established and developed starting in the 13th century under the influence of patterns from the West and the South West. Initially, they were charitable confraternities that operated at hospitals, then, starting in the 14th century, they included confraternities of craftsmen and merchants, and finally confraternities of clergymen, including rural priests, as well as confraternities of the poor. The latter helped the poor and the needy, but there were also clergymen and municipal officials in their ranks. Not only did they assist beggars but, above all, supervised them and regulated mutual relations. In the first half of the 15th century, literary confraternities under the patronage of the Blessed Virgin Mary emerged, mostly in cities. They accepted literate women and men (*fratres litterati*), and their main duty was to sing at Sunday and holiday masses, as well as during other services. Their members taught catechism to the poor and provided material help for the poor and the sick. Confraternities remained under the jurisdiction of the bishop, had their own statutes, holidays, and a separate chapel or altar in the church where their religious practices were carried out. The most intense development of confraternities is datable to the 16th and 17th centuries.

The multifaceted activities of confraternities provide a good basis for a holistic approach to history that combines various fields of cultural, intellectual, socio-economic, political, religious, and mental life of the times. Confraternities engaged in a variety of activities that covered almost every aspect of social life. They contributed to the development of various cults and paraliturgies, reflected the development of certain dogmas before they were defined by popes and ecclesiastical councils, and helped their members understand certain truths of faith (especially those related to the dedication of a confraternity).

52 Originally sodalities were established as societies for young boys and their aim was to combine religious life with studies. Later on, sodalities would be established for particular groups in society, such as priests, noblemen and women, merchants, labourers, clerks, etc.

Confraternities were the religious avant-garde that awakened and intensified piety among their members and in society. Moreover, well-organised confraternities produced strong social bonds based on religious premises. The vast majority were multi-strata associations that forged and maintained links between different social groups. Confraternities created a specific space for the resolution of conflict and the coming together of people from opposite poles in everyday life. Joint activities resulted in the tightening of bonds within the confraternity and society. An important role was played by the resolution of shared problems, threats, and life crises that affected the brethren, as well as by their successes. This aspect of confraternal activity was closely linked to charity, primarily aimed at supporting their own members, but also at taking care of the poor, the homeless, the lonely, and in running hospitals and hospices. Some confraternities focused on education and upbringing, thereby contributing to the development of education, as well as spirituality. In the post-Tridentine period, confraternities educated society in the spirit of reform and thus became an important counter-reformation tool.

In addressing the issues of culture, we should stress the contribution confraternities made to sacred art and architecture. They occasionally supported the construction or reconstruction of churches and chapels, and took care of the interiors, as well as the decor of their mother churches and altars. Their achievements in the field of music also should not be overlooked. Confraternities promoted the composition of original music created exclusively to them. Most confraternities seemed to have worshiped through various songs and psalms, with literary confraternities leading the way in this.

In order to operate in so many different ways and influence the lives of their members, and not only them, confraternities needed adequate funds, hence their involvement in economic activity. Their assets were comprised of the income from membership fees, funeral fees, fines imposed on negligent members, ad hoc donations, and alms, testamentary legacies bequeathed by benefactors, and rents from the lease of real estate (land, orchards, tenements, etc.).

The variety of types of confraternities and the complexity of their work resulted in a situation where almost every aspect of human life was influenced by their activity. Members could fulfil their religious obligations and engage in devotional practices far beyond the mandatory minimum. In so doing, they strengthened their interpersonal bonds and provided a sense of unity within the urban or rural community. Those who remained outside the confraternity system were at risk of alienation and unable to call other people brothers. Spiritual brotherhood was evident in the mutual concern for salvation (which motivated religious activity) and the mutual assistance provided in daily life and extreme situations. Depending on the type of confraternity to which they

belonged, members were to follow a specific pattern of behaviour that shaped their views, habits, and mentality. To a smaller extent, confraternities played a role in the parish similar to that performed by religious orders and congregations on a larger scale. It was their duty to cultivate the memory of the dead, offer masses for them, and perform other memorial services.

The vitality and specificity of confraternities reflect the functioning of the Church and its influence from the perspective of the faithful and reveal the relationship between ecclesiastical and lay Church structures. Although specific types of confraternities placed a clear emphasis on certain activities, members were active in other areas, as well. On the one hand, this was a sign of a confraternity's high mobility and flexibility, on the other it complicates their typology and classification.

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PART 2

Devotion and Prayer



The Ethics of Confraternities

Gervase Rosser

1 The Ethical Purpose of Confraternities

The *raison d'être* of the medieval confraternities was ethical.¹ As other articles in this volume extensively indicate, confraternities were diverse in their declared purposes and in their practical undertakings. Yet, infusing them all was a language of moral reform that was simultaneously addressed to the singular participant, to the body of the members, and to society at large. To say that confraternities shared a common rhetoric of human and spiritual values is not to say that either the institutions themselves or their individual members were universally virtuous in their intentions or beneficial in their actions. Clearly, this was not the case. On the other hand, even the politically driven organisation or the selfishly motivated brother or sister would have lacked standing and power without the rhetoric of virtue that gave status and meaning to the confraternity's very existence. Such a moral rhetoric has tended to be underestimated by historians, in part because its repetitive character makes it seem platitudinous and in part because of a modern tendency to assume that every ideal is merely a material motive in disguise. Yet, the insistence of tens of thousands of medieval and early modern confraternity documents on the moral purpose of these organisations demands, at least, that this discourse be taken seriously.

The language of moral distinction was reinforced in all confraternities by the ethical and material requirements of membership. As was stipulated *ad infinitum* by their statutes, new recruits were to be "of good reputation," were obliged to swear their commitment to a life of virtue, and could be expelled for moral failings. The ability to pay an entrance fee or regular subscription, modest though this was in most cases, was itself perceived as a guarantee of social stability and worth. The social credit that accrued to the member of a confraternity was similar to that "certificate of moral qualification" that Max

¹ The ideas summarised in this chapter are discussed at greater length in Gervase Rosser, *The Art of Solidarity in the Middle Ages. Guilds in England 1250–1550* (Oxford: 2015).

Weber associated with the Protestant sects after the Reformation.² The badge of confraternity membership was a potent resource. By the same token, however, the wearer was committed to an ethical role in the world.

The present chapter develops the argument that confraternity membership had potentially profound consequences for the ethical growth of the individual and for the formation of a society grounded in the principles of mutual trust and care. To appreciate the ethical significance of confraternities calls for awareness of their intellectual and moral roots in both classical and Christian philosophy, both of which strands of thought were given a new and practical focus in 13th-century Europe. A central theme in what follows is the artificial nature of the confraternity, as the deliberate creation of a social means to an ethical end. Confraternities have been compared to families, and the resemblance was made explicit in the language of “brotherhood” and “sisterhood”; yet no less significant is the difference between the two forms of human relationship: the guild was experienced, by those who volunteered to join, as a deliberately designed agency for change. The change in question was both personal and collective. The terms of membership required of the confraternity member a desire to be transformed by the experience, through engagement in charitable relationships with others both within and beyond the society. At issue in the declared principles and in the philanthropic practice of the guilds was the nature of friendship, trust, and charity. A consideration of these core themes in the lives of the guilds makes clear how spiritual growth was understood by participants to be the fruit of social action.

2 Human Frailty as Human Potential

The ethical obligations of confraternities called for action on the part of the individual brother and sister, not merely to fulfil the public duties of a formulaic charity, but to behave in such a way that they might, themselves, grow as moral human agents. Not every confraternity was seen in such a virtuous light by outside observers, who at times had good grounds for the conviction that a particular association had been formed under the cover of a seeming piety in order to serve quite different ends. Rebels in the French town of Châteauneuf-lès-Tours were said in 1305 to have plotted together in confraternities in which the rhetoric of community had been usurped “under the false veil of a confraternity, as if to make a monopoly and to usurp the name of commune” (“sub

2 Max Weber, “The Protestant Sects and the Spirit of Capitalism,” in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, (ed.) and trans. H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (London: 1948), 305–306.

ficto velamine confratriae quasi monopola facientes nomenque communiae usurpantes").³ Nonetheless, the distortion of the confraternity model for corrupt purposes was possible only because of a prevailing perception that the purpose of these organisations was to foster the active piety of their members. Virtuous interaction with others was intended not to be a mere social façade, nor the hollow execution of a cold principle, but rather a necessary and creative exchange between people, both within and beyond the confraternity, who were in need of one another.

The ethics of the confraternities rested in an ancient understanding of the fragility of human nature. The recognition that "none of us is individually self-sufficient" was, in classical Greek thought, the basis both of society and of morality.⁴ One person's need was the opportunity for another to engage his or her potential for virtuous action. As Cicero would say of friendship, "I am inclined to think that friends ought at times to be in want of something. For instance, what scope would my affections have had if Scipio had never wanted my advice or co-operation?"⁵ The foundational Christian injunction to "love thy neighbour as thyself" (Matt. 22.39, Douai) was predicated on the same premise. The frailty of others gave to individuals a crucial opportunity to exercise a capacity for charity that, in turn, enabled them to grow as moral actors and human beings.

Starting in the 13th century, the translation into Latin, completed in the 1240s, of Aristotle's *Ethics* was of enormous importance as a catalyst for the multiplication of confraternity foundations. Whereas the philosophy of the Stoics, which had prevailed in the writings of the Christian Fathers, viewed ethics from the perspective of the individual, a right decision being judged as such when it was good for the particular person, Aristotelian philosophy placed emphasis on the quality of reciprocal human relationships. According to the *Ethics*, in order to enable oneself to act virtuously, and so to fulfil one's potential for development as a human being, each person needs others upon whom to practise charity, justice, or gentleness. In this perspective, ethics are social virtues. Among Aristotle's readers at this time was Thomas Aquinas, who similarly understood morality to be not a static quality possessed by an individual in isolation, but a form of social action.⁶ Virtue was brought into being in the world by the active human communication of charity, or love. From the

3 *Les établissements de Rouen*, (ed.) A. Giry (Paris: 1855), 107.

4 Plato, *Republic*, (ed.) and trans. C.D.C. Reeve (Indianapolis: 2004), 47 (11.369b).

5 Cicero, *De amicitia*, chapt. 14, in *Cicero De senectute, De amicitia, De divinatione*, (ed.) W.A. Falconer (London: 1959), 162–163.

6 Bonnie Dorrick Kent, *Virtues of the Will: The Transformation of Ethics in the Later Thirteenth Century* (Washington: 1995), 206–212, 246 and *passim*; Mary M. Keys, *Aquinas, Aristotle and*

theological arguments of Aquinas, Albertus Magnus, and others, these ideas found their way into sermons for the laity and so into the everyday environment of the founders of confraternities.⁷ At the same time as Aristotle was being newly received in the West, the great pastoral reform movement of the Western Church promoted the idea that a full Christian life could be lived not only by specialists with monastic callings, but by lay men and women in the world.⁸ For a group of lay people to form a confraternity was to emulate aspects of the regular life of monks and nuns, while extending the transformative potential of that model to parts of society from which it had previously remained distant and unattainable. The greatly increased proliferation of confraternities in the historical record from the mid-13th century onwards can be attributed in considerable measure to this dual contemporary impetus of moral philosophy and pastoral engagement. The sponsorship of many confraternity foundations by the new mendicant orders is a symptom of this conjuncture of ethical thought and social practice.

The Dominican theologian and preacher Remigio de' Girolami, impressing upon his Florentine congregation around 1300 the need for a collective response to civic violence, cited the words of Christ, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. 18.20, Douai) and Aristotle's observation that men have a greater capacity to think and to act when they are in the company of friends.⁹ The ethical impetus motivating the founders of the later medieval confraternities was a response to this perception of human interdependence and social morality. Whatever public projects or works of charity were undertaken by confraternities in particular cases—inviting the poor to dine together with confraternity members, building a bridge, running a school or a hospital—the moral purpose ran deeper. This was to create an environment in which individual members might,

the Promise of the Common Good (Cambridge: 2006), 85 and *passim*. See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, (ed.) and trans. T. Irwin, 2nd ed. (Indianapolis: 1999).

7 M.W.F. Stone, "The Care of Souls and 'Practical Ethics,'" in *The Cambridge History of Medieval Philosophy*, (ed.) Robert Pasnan, 2 vols (Cambridge: 2010), 1:517–535.

8 Marie-Dominique Chenu, "Monks, Canons and Laymen in Search of the Apostolic Life," in his *Nature, Man, and Society in the Twelfth Century*, (ed.) and trans. J. Taylor and L.K. Little (Chicago: 1968), 202–238; Alfred Haverkamp, "Leben in Gemeinschaften: alte und neue Formen im 12. Jahrhundert," [1995], repr. In *Gemeinden, Gemeinschaften und Kommunikationsformen im hohen und späten Mittelalter*, (eds.) F. Burgard, L. Clemens and M. Matheus (Trier: 2002), 207–236.

9 Charles T. Davis, "An Early Florentine Political Theorist: Fra Remigio de' Girolami," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 104 (1960): 662–676; Matthew Kempshall, *The Common Good in Late Medieval Political Thought* (Oxford: 1999), 327.

through interaction with one another and with others outside the society, foster the fulfilment of their own potential as moral human beings.

3 Artificial Families, Unnatural Communities

The charitable network of the confraternity was not naturally a given, but had to be worked for. Demographic upheaval and population movement which, although by no means new in the last three centuries of the Middle Ages, were intensified by the overpopulation of the 13th century followed by the famine and plague of the 14th and 15th, led to a greatly increased number of deracinated migrants and consequently to a growing challenge to mitigate the difficulties of survival, especially in the diverse and unstable world of the towns. The thousands of confraternities recorded among the urban populations of late-medieval Europe point to the perceived value of these societies as responses to the practical and moral hazards of a world in flux. It is sometimes observed that confraternities, with their language of “brotherhood” and “sisterhood,” offered to the displaced new arrival in a town the support of a surrogate family.¹⁰ Notwithstanding its partial truth, this idea oversimplifies the thinking behind the familial discourse of the confraternities. In fact, to the initiate in a confraternity, one’s new “brothers” and “sisters” were, precisely, *not* one’s kin: they were strangers, with whom one had just vowed to develop a new relationship of trust and mutual support. The members agreed to behave, as the statutes of a confraternity at Lincoln put it, “*as if* they were children of the same parents.”¹¹ The point was to treat unrelated human beings with the care expected of family members. Christ had made the point explicitly, when told that his mother and brothers were waiting for him. His answer had been:

Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? And he stretched forth his hand towards his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.

Matt. 12.49–50, Douai

10 This was the thesis of the author of the first scholarly monograph on the medieval guilds and confraternities and it has been often restated; see Wilhelm Eduard Wilda, *Das Gildenwesen im Mittelalter* (Berlin: 1831).

11 The National Archives, London, PRO C 47/40/143: “stabunt cum illo [sc. a fellow confraternity member] in conciliis et auxiliis sicut frater eorum ex patre eorum et matre” (1389).

The decision of a man or woman to join others in a confraternity was a conscious choice to create a family-like relationship of solidarity with others. It required a putting aside of self-interest; and it did not come naturally.

4 Networks of Friendship

Just as, by their adoption of the language of familial relationships, confraternities challenged their members to reconsider the basis of true fraternity, so also did they renew the concept and the meaning of friendship. The motif of friendship and mutual love recurs as a universal goal of medieval confraternities. Because neither the bonds of personal friendship nor the emotional ties of love are given the same social values today as they held in the later Middle Ages and Renaissance, it takes an effort to recognise the significance which contemporaries attached to these feelings. But we would be wrong to dismiss as superficial the declaration, many times reiterated by confraternities, that their purpose was to foster friendship and love. One such statement may stand for thousands: "Each brother and sister of the confraternity should love one another with all the zeal of which they are capable."¹²

Aristotle, once again, provided a basis for late-medieval and Renaissance thought on this subject: as the *Ethics* underlined, friendship for another person was the starting point of personal growth.¹³ Christianity added to this philosophy an ultimately higher purpose: as Augustine had influentially described in the *Confessions*, human friendship was the means given to the individual to open outwards and, by suppressing selfishness, to realise a divine potential for love.¹⁴ This lent momentous importance to the value of friendship in the confraternities. For, in the words of a confraternity at Leicester, "God is charity, and he who remains in charity, remains in God"¹⁵ (clearly echoing 1 John 4.16). Therefore, as the brothers and sisters of a religious guild of St Francis in King's Lynn put it in their statutes of 1454:

Everybody shall keep peace, love, and charity with [each] other in as much as he can or may; harm nor heaviness wilfully he shall not do, but

¹² London, The National Archives, PRO C 47/38/6 ; printed in *Cambridge Guild Records*, (ed.) M. Bateson (Cambridge: 1903), 79: the confraternity of St Catherine in the church of St Andrew, Cambridge (14th century).

¹³ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book VIII.

¹⁴ Augustine, *Confessions*, (ed.) and trans. H. Chadwick (Oxford: 1991), 56–61 (IV. 4–9).

¹⁵ Jonathan Wilshire, *The Religious Gilds of Medieval Leicester* (Leicester: 1979), 24–25.

with weighty words, strength, and might, as well without the town as within, he shall succour and keep him in his need.¹⁶

5 Moral Horizons and the Goals of Confraternity Charity

For the great majority of confraternities, the horizon of moral responsibility was limited to the geographical and social environment with which the brothers and sisters themselves were more-or-less familiar. Confraternal charity tended to be focused upon the members—who typically did not exceed more than a few dozen in any given society—together with a limited range of external beneficiaries. Confraternity memberships, where registers of members allow these to be analysed, tend to show that these were drawn from the middling ranks of late medieval and early modern society, extending from relatively comfortable rural labourers and peasant landowners and urban artisans to minor gentry and merchants. Many confraternities in the south of Europe admitted men only, while some, and in the north the majority, comprised both men and women. Individuals could and (as testaments very frequently record) did belong to more than one confraternity, thereby widening their field of contacts. Every confraternity was varied in its membership to at least some degree and, in a minority of instances, the social range was very marked. The “poor confraternity” of Notre Dame de Thuyn at Ypres, recorded in 1426, included poor, blind, deaf, and lame members, the majority by implication of very modest means, together with a number of rich bourgeois.¹⁷ The diversity of the memberships had limitations. The inclusion of aristocrats was relatively uncommon and likely to be honorific. The absolutely poor could only participate by invitation. Nevertheless, and to varying degrees, each confraternity presented the new member with the challenge of establishing relationships with unfamiliar others.

At times the localism and social restriction of confraternity perspectives seemed, to contemporary critics, solipsistic and selfish. An English preacher of the late 14th century, deploying an inclusive language that was influenced by John Wycliffe, denounced all confraternities as the ironic creators not of unity, but of division:

¹⁶ Norwich, Norfolk Record Office, MS King's Lynn Gd. 80. In the English context, confraternities were usually called either “fraternities” or “guilds.”

¹⁷ Jacques Toussaert, *Le sentiment religieux en Flandre à la fin du Moyen Âge* (Paris: 1963), 482.

Christian men should be lovers of brotherhood, not of brotherhood of friars nor of brotherhood of guilds, but of brotherhood in Christ and of Holy Church our mother. The men that make these sects work against Christ's brotherhood. Christ worked in many ways for the unity of this brotherhood, but these sects work hard to diversify it.¹⁸

It is understandable that a form of association that was bound by the members' oath to keep the society's secrets, and in which material assistance was confined to the group itself and to selected outsiders, should at times have attracted suspicion and even hostility. Yet, to this invocation of an idealised universal community of all Christians, confraternities returned the answer given by Jesus himself, when he was asked, "Who is my neighbour?" The response had been the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10.29–37): a story that epitomised the way in which moral behaviour is necessarily situated in the world of human beings. Given the embodied nature of human existence on earth, men and women are inevitably closer to some people than to others. As Augustine, in turn, had expressed it, one cannot love all human beings equally, so one should concentrate one's moral energy on those with whom, "as if by chance," one finds oneself in close proximity.¹⁹ If the exercise of charity in the medieval confraternities tended to be confined to the immediate context, within which members developed particular relationships over time, this was by moral design. The bond created between the confraternity member and the familiar recipient of charity was of a different order from the relatively superficial relationship between the alms-giver and the altogether unknown poor.

That personal engagement was facilitated and fostered in part by the changing demography of late medieval and early modern Europe. In the preceding period, towards 1300, the experience of population explosion contributed to the image of the anonymous pauper. The recipient of alms at this time was frequently faceless. After the mid-14th century, declining population and modestly rising living standards, albeit in an environment characterised by continuing uncertainty and the precariousness of personal fortunes, created a different context for the exercise of charity, one that tended increasingly to be focused upon the known victim of misfortune and the familiar neighbour

18 *English Wycliffite Sermons*, (ed.) A. Hudson, 5 vols (Oxford: 1983–96), vol. 1, 626–627; syntax slightly adapted and spelling modernised (c.1380s–c.1410). See n. 16 for a note on terminology.

19 Augustine, *De doctrina christiana*, (ed.) and trans. R.P.H. Green (Oxford: 1996), 38–39 (i.28).

who fell into difficulty.²⁰ Relationships were built over time with beneficiaries whose worldly circumstances were typically not very different from those of the confraternity members who befriended and helped them. The Lübeck brotherhood of St Antony from the mid-15th century maintained a list of vulnerable non-members of the confraternity who were issued weekly rations of food: a pound of butter, two rye loaves and two *Pfennige*, allowances that increased with the growing resources of this and other similar guilds. In 1503 the confraternity of St Leonard, again in Lübeck, was issuing a pound of butter (replaced in Lent by herrings) together with four rye loaves and four *Pfennige* each week; at Easter the handouts were supplemented by eggs.²¹ In Florence, the Buonomini di San Martino discreetly identified and assisted neighbours who were not confraternity members but who were seen to be at risk of falling into debt, thereby jeopardising their public reputation and consequently their ability to find work.²² This concern with the “shamefaced poor” is found in many European towns at this period. A similar society founded in Siena in 1492, the “Congregazione dei poveri vergognosi,” issued alms on a daily basis to families and individuals in need, their targets being for the most part humble workers: all were perceived to be vulnerable to the catastrophe of finding themselves unable to work because of illness or accident.²³ As with all the charitable activities of confraternities, the issue had a practical dimension in the material support that, on varying scales, was distributed in order that individuals should not lose their livings and so fall into a cycle of ruin. But if this was its pragmatic purpose, the underlying ethical principle was that both confraternity members and those whom they helped, although currently less fortunate, were equal and united in their common humanity. To help in the distribution of charity was to receive a lesson in humility. The extent to which that experience was morally transformative would have depended upon the individual confraternity member.

20 Michel Mollat, *Les pauvres au Moyen Âge* (Paris: 1978) ; Luciano Orioli, *Le confraternite medievali e il problema della povertà. Lo statuto della Compagnia di Santa Maria Vergine e di San Zenobio di Firenze nel secolo XIV* (Rome: 1984).

21 Monika Zmyslony, *Die Bruderschaften in Lübeck bis zur Reformation* (Kiel: 1977), 129–134.

22 Amleto Spicciari, “The “poveri vergognosi” in Fifteenth-Century Florence: The First 30 Years’ Activity of the Buonomini di S. Martino,” in *Aspects of Poverty in Early Modern Europe*, (ed.) T. Riis (Florence: 1981), 119–182. See also *Confraternity of the Buonomini di San Martino. Historical Archive* (Florence: 2001) and Samantha Hughes-Johnston “Early Medici Patronage and the Confraternity of the Buonomini di San Martino,” *Confraternitas* 22:2 (2011): 3–25.

23 Duccio Balestracci, “I lavoratori poveri e i “disciplinati” senesi. Una forma di assistenza alla fine del Quattrocento,” in *Artigiani e salariati. Il mondo del lavoro nell’Italia dei secoli XII–XV* (Pistoia: 1984), 345–368.

While the smaller confraternities may have been relatively more concerned to address the recurrent poverty of their own members, the general impression given by the evidence of late-medieval and early modern confraternity charity is that it was largely focused upon familiar recipients; that it was predicated on the recognition that there was in general little difference between givers and receivers, all being at risk of the vagaries of fortune; and that, while it made a significant if inadequate contribution to the overall needs of the indigent, its main purpose was perceived to be not the creation of an efficient and all-encompassing welfare system, but the development of habits of care for others on the part of the confraternity members.

6 Material and Spiritual Values of Trust

The material significance of the ethical values of confraternities was most evident in economic relationships. Not only in those craft associations which declared specific concerns with particular trades, but equally in the larger number of confraternities that brought together workers in various professions, members found in this context a means to create the basis of trust upon which all crafts and relationships were dependent. Given the scale of movement in the late-medieval and early modern labour force, and given also the diversity of economic production which necessitated the continual renegotiation of working relationships between practitioners of separate specialist skills, guilds and confraternities offered a vital resource for the establishment of mutual trust.

The need to consolidate trust through the oaths of mutual support required by confraternity membership was at times more narrowly, and at times more inclusively felt. At all periods of the Middle Ages and Renaissance, associations of wealthy traders are recorded whose exclusive concern appears to have been with the protection of their own elite interests. These associations, frequently designated in modern historiography as “merchant guilds,” tended in their statutes and policies to manifest no more ethical concern for others than would secure the profits of big business.²⁴ At particular moments, also, groups of hired workers would foreground their common class interest in resistance to the oppressions of the merchants who supplied raw materials and

24 Sheilagh Ogilvie, *Institutions and European Trade: Merchant Guilds, 1000–1800* (Cambridge: 2011).

controlled production.²⁵ At the same time, however, various considerations persuaded even rich merchants and dependent workers to cultivate relations with significant others, and indeed with one another. After all, craft masters and dependent journeymen did not inhabit altogether separate worlds. In fact, over the course of a career an artisan typically experienced a changing and unpredictable status. That shared experience was underlined by the mid-15th-century statutes of the confraternity of the Pisan goldsmiths, which reminded its members to attend the funeral service for a fellow craftsman or a member of his family, whatever their social rank:

If by chance some master or journeyman or mother or wife or sister of a goldsmith should happen to die [...] the captains or consuls are required to call together all the goldsmiths and to go to honour the deceased and accompany him to his burial themselves, and this must be done for the small and the great, whatever family they belong to.²⁶

Historical studies that have focused only upon the self-declared interest groups of wealthy traders and upon officially registered guilds of craft masters have overlooked the extent to which other, more variegated forms of association fostered both material and ethical relationships across socio-economic divides.

7 Spiritual Exercise and Self-Formation

The language used by guilds and confraternities in their statutes, services, meetings, and celebrations, impelled individual members to reflect repeatedly on what it meant to relate virtuously to one's fellow human beings. This confraternal discourse tended to be conservative and had the potential to be oppressive; yet, at the same time, it engaged tens of thousands of guild and confraternity members in moral reflection, ethical judgement, and civic responsibility. It goes almost without saying that this discourse was itself derived from the encompassing Christian culture of medieval and early modern

25 For example, in the Ciompi revolt of 1378 in Florence: Samuel K. Cohn, *The Laboring Classes in Renaissance Florence* (New York: 1980); Franco Franceschi, *Oltre il "Tumulto": lavoratori fiorentini dell'Arte della Lana fra Tre e Quattrocento* (Florence: 1993).

26 Franco Franceschi, "The Rituals of the Guilds: Examples from Tuscan Cities, Thirteenth to Sixteenth Centuries," in *Late Medieval and Early Modern Ritual: Studies in Italian Urban Culture*, (eds.) S. Cohn, M. Fantoni, F. Franceschi and F. Ricciardelli (Turnhout: 2013), 65–92, at 75.

Europe. The individual confraternity member, historically bound, was not a completely free subject to reflect on ethical issues. The challenge confraternities presented to their members, however, was to reconsider how the values of that dominant Christian culture should be internalised and lived. The multiplication of confraternities that the sources record from the 13th century onward flowed from a large-scale critique of the perceived limitations of the Church's pastoral mission up to that date: a critique that had begun with clerical promoters of reform, but which had spread to elements in the lay community anxious to realise for themselves a more engaged and purposeful life on the Christian model. The process of conscientious self-examination and the practice of moral judgement in the exercise of charity, which were regularly required of confraternity members, were techniques of self-formation.²⁷ In these practices, the brothers and sisters of a confraternity, whatever the limitations of their social status and circumstances, were endowed with a degree of agency and such autonomy as enabled them to make genuinely ethical decisions.

Confraternity statutes and accounts give an indication of the range of circumstances in which members could find themselves compelled to exercise and refine their ethical judgement. The violence of urban factions, for which Remigio de' Girolami reproved the Florentines, was a widespread stimulus for the formation of confraternities, a number of which, like the Bolognese confraternity known as the *devoti*, proclaimed as their primary purpose the reconciliation of enemies and the promotion of peace.²⁸ Some of the earliest recorded medieval confraternities, which were active in England around the year 1000, laid particular emphasis in their regulations upon the need to restrain violence.²⁹ A significant context for the multiplication of confraternities may indeed have been the contemporary Peace of God movement, in which laymen swore oaths to limit vendettas and to maintain civic harmony.³⁰ Driving every confraternity foundation was a conviction of the transcendent value

27 Such are what Foucault called "techniques of the self". See Michel Foucault, *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, (ed.) P. Rabinow and trans. R. Hurley and others (London: 2000), 277.

28 For example, Jennifer Fisk Rondeau, "Homosexuality and Civic (Dis)order in Late Medieval Italian Confraternities," in *The Politics of Ritual Kinship: Confraternities and the Social Order in Early Modern Italy*, (ed.) N. Terpstra (Cambridge: 2000), 30–47, esp. 36–37; Andreas Dehmer, *Italienische Bruderschaftsbanner des Mittelalters und der Renaissance* (Berlin: 2004), 86–87.

29 *English Historical Documents*, 1, (ed.) D. Whitelock, 2nd ed. (London: 1996), 424–427, 657–660.

30 H.E.J. Cowdrey, "The Peace and the Truce of God in the Eleventh Century," *Past and Present*, 46 (1970): 42–67. A link between the peace movements and the confraternities was also suggested by Catherine Vincent, "L'apport des confréries à la pratique du droit dans la société urbaine, à partir d'exemples français et italiens des XIII^e–XV^e siècles," in *Stadt*

of human love: a principle reiterated so often in confraternity statutes that the modern reader may underestimate its seriousness. Typical of thousands is this declaration:

If any of the brothers or sisters quarrels with any other (which God forbid), it is ordained that, in as much as the confraternity was founded to cherish kindness and love, the aldermen, stewards and two help-men shall deal with the matter.³¹

The particular ethical concerns of confraternities varied, but the 15th-century statutes of a rural confraternity near Bergamo in north Italy are broadly indicative. The members of this society distinguished themselves by singing a particular song in praise of the Virgin Mary. They maintained a hospice (*domus misericordie*) and a school, kept regular fasts, and made confession three times a year. One of the women in the confraternity was elected to the role of administering charity and of instructing the other sisters of the company in its values.³² Once again we notice in this combination of activities the declared intention not simply to help others, but by doing so to foster the ethical development of the individual confraternity member.

8 Models of Ethical Living

In all areas of moral behaviour, the individual member was invited to make of himself or herself a model of probity, an inspiration to encourage the emulation of others outside the association. The collective concern with the internal health of the organisation was driven by the desire that it should catalyse moral change in the wider social arena. As this was expressed in the late-13th-century statutes of a confraternity at Fanjeaux in southern France, the annual procession of confraternity members through the town was staged in order “that others may see this, along with the other good things done by the confraternity,” and with the intent “that those witnesses may themselves be inspired

und Recht im Mittelalter. La ville et le droit au Moyen Âge, (eds.) P. Monnet and O.G. Oexle (Göttingen: 2003), 97–115, at 101.

31 *English Gilds*, (eds.) L.T. Smith and J.T. Smith. (Early English Text Society, original series) 40 (London: 1870), 158–159: statutes of the guild of St Mary at Hull, said to have been founded in 1357.

32 Maria Teresa Brolis, “Confraternite bergamasche bassomedievali. Nuove fonti e prospettive di ricerca,” *Rivista di storia della chiesa in Italia*, 49 (1995): 337–354, at 346–347.

to pray to the Virgin.”³³ In a similarly choreographed example, recorded in the 15th century at Arles, on the day of the confraternity feast members visited each of the town's hospitals, distributing to their patients portions of bread, meat and wine, before partaking of the communal meal of the confraternity after which, again, left-overs were given to the poor.³⁴ At Châlons-sur-Marne in the 14th century, a confraternity calling itself “la charité” distributed white bread to the sick in local hospitals and to prisoners each Sunday, supported by weekly contributions of one *denier* from each confraternity member. In addition, the confraternity encouraged devotion on a larger scale by advertising sermons which all townspeople were invited to attend.³⁵ A confraternity of the Holy Ghost at Freiburg im Uechtland in the 15th century was responsible for an extensive charitable initiative, which it further advertised in the wings of the altarpiece it commissioned in 1506–1507 showing the poor and sick receiving the care of the confraternity.³⁶ Such demonstrative piety, manifested in diverse ways by all medieval and early modern confraternities, redounded to the benefit of the members' own reputations; but materialist self-interest cannot fully account for the detail, the variety, and the extent of such enactments of charitable relationships with particular individuals and of wider social engagement. As Aristotle had said, and as Christ had demonstrated, virtue must be acquired through practice: nobody starts out virtuous, but one may become so by doing those things that a virtuous person does and by repeating them regularly so that, in due course, they become internalised and habitual. The pattern of confraternity charity was intended to foster just such moral growth on the part of individual members.

Together with the practice of charity, confraternities fostered a regular habit of self-examination, and monitored the mores of their members:

It is ordained that if any brother of the guild should be convicted of adultery or any other notable crime, then he shall be publicly defamed by the master and wardens of the guild; and if on the third warning he will not desist, repentant, from such a crime, then he shall be removed from the

33 Arnaud Ramière de Fortanier, “La confrérie Notre Dame de Fanjeaux et son développement au Moyen Âge,” *Cahiers de Fanjeaux* 11 (1976): 321–356.

34 Louis Stouff, “Une confrérie arlésienne de la première moitié du XVe siècle: La confrérie de Saint-Pierre de Luxembourg,” *Provence historique*, 23 (1973): 339–360, at 358–359.

35 *Institutions ecclésiastiques*, vol. 3, *Histoire des institutions françaises au Moyen Âge*, (eds.) F. Lot and R. Fawtier (Paris: 1962), 290–291, 395–397.

36 Katharina Simon-Muscheid, “Spätmittelalterliche Bruderschaften und Königreiche,” in *Mittelalterliche Bruderschaften in europäischen Städten. Funktionen, Formen, Akteure*, (ed.) M. Escher-Apsner (Frankfurt am Main: 2009), 255–291, at 271.

guild, and on no account be readmitted, for it is written: "Let the name of such a malefactor be blotted out of the book of the living, and not be written with the righteous" [Psalms 69.28]. And if any of the brotherhood be inclined to some error or vice which is not notorious, as the master and wardens may establish, they are earnestly to warn them about this failing, in accordance with the scriptural truth: "If thy brother trespass against thee [go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone": Matthew 18.15], so that they may desist from such crimes.³⁷

Disciplinary meetings were a regular feature of life in confraternities. Three of the four annual sessions of an English confraternity at Wisbech in Cambridgeshire, apart from the general feast, were stated to be "for the correction and amending of members' behaviour."³⁸ Another confraternity in the same town specified in 1384 that gambling would be condemned and that persistent offence would lead to expulsion.³⁹ Keeping a brothel was specified as equally unacceptable in a London confraternity at the same period.⁴⁰ Members who allowed personal quarrels to surface at the general gathering of the confraternity were subjected to public reproof and material fines.⁴¹

From the ethical perspective, one should underline that in principle the judgement of members' behaviour was carried out by and in the presence of their peers. Clerics certainly played a part in the drawing up of confraternity statutes, but they did so under the direction of their lay employers, the masters and wardens of these secular associations. The point deserves to be stressed again that, while the language of moral probity that pervaded the guilds and confraternities was derived from the dominant clerical culture of the Christian Church, in the context of these associations it was appropriated, owned and deployed by the lay men and women who created and directed these bodies. Priests regularly belonged to confraternities in the later Middle Ages and Renaissance, yet they did not control them.⁴² The member of the 15th-century

37 "The Guild of St Mary and St John the Baptist, Lichfield: Ordinances of the Late Fourteenth Century," (ed.) G. Rosser. *Collections for a History of Staffordshire*, 4th series, 13 (1988): 19–26.

38 The National Archives, London, PRO C 47/38/39 (1389).

39 The National Archives, London, PRO C 47/38/41.

40 The National Archives, London, PRO C 47/41/193.

41 For example, two members of a guild at Lynn in Norfolk, England, who in 1516 were fined because they "violently usurped in words and deeds in the presence of the alderman sitting on the general day". Norwich, Norfolk Record Office, MS King's Lynn Gd78, Statutes and accounts of the Guild of St Antony, 1467–1537, *sub anno*.

42 This changed from the later 16th century, when the Counter Reformation introduced a concerted attempt to bring confraternities under clerical direction.

Florentine Compagnia di Gesù Pellegrino who had infringed the rules of the society was obliged to kneel before the friar confessor to acknowledge his error and then submit to a scale of penitential flagellation. Yet, even in such a case as this, the corrector himself was subject to the rules of the confraternity, whose direction remained in the hands of the lay officials.⁴³ The process of collective moral judgement that was cultivated and regularly practised in confraternities imposed upon all members a burden of scrutiny that could be oppressive, yet functioned as a school of ethics.

9 Individual Virtue and Collective Good

Confraternities placed ethical value both on the collectivity and the individual member. This historical example problematises the dualistic model, which in the modern Western world has prevailed for too long, whereby “the individual” is categorically and morally opposed to “the community.” Medieval and early modern confraternities were rooted in an understanding that human nature, in order to survive, needs to face both inside and outside itself. The balance of this relationship was not easy to manage. It called for a deliberate suppression of selfish interest in order to open oneself to the needs of another. Confraternity members were required to do this in their diverse undertakings to befriend and to assist the aged, the poor, the sick, or those in prison. The persons who regularly performed these acts of charity exposed themselves to the discomfiting likelihood that they would be altered by the experience. At the same time, the individual brother or sister was not subsumed anonymously into the communal ethos, but was valued as a singular Christian soul to be befriended in life and prayed for after death, and as a particular contributor to the collective enterprise.

Confraternities expressed their sense of reality, too, in their conception of the ethical “community” not as a fixed or simple state, but as the challenge of a shared responsibility. As the political philosopher Roberto Esposito has reminded us, the word “community” derives from the Latin *cum*: “with” and *munus*: “burden.”⁴⁴ The recognition of such a common responsibility is widespread across diverse cultures: whether described in religious or secular terms, the shared concern is always with a perceived need to defend certain human

43 John Henderson, “Confraternities and the Church in Late Medieval Florence,” in *Voluntary Religion*, (eds.) W. Sheils and D. Wood (Oxford: 1986), 69–83, at 74–75.

44 Roberto Esposito, *Communitas: The Origin and Destiny of Community* [1998], trans. T. Campbell (Stanford: 2010), 4–6.

values. The protection of the weak, assistance for the sick, the denunciation of violence, were identified by the confraternities of medieval and early modern Europe as ethical responsibilities that were laid upon Christian society at large, and to which these groups exemplified a mode of response. Confraternity membership was not exclusive: the brother or sister, who wore the confraternity's livery and badge while engaged on the public work of the association, was nonetheless by this token a parent, a worker, or a civic official. Confraternity members were thus able to develop multiple identities: loyalty to the association co-existed with personal concerns, family ties, neighbourhood identity, and participation in the kingdom or city-state. The ethical values of confraternities were not a private code: they proposed, rather, a way of living the Christian life that was held up as an example for anyone who might be moved to emulate it. Their example deserves our attention, both as historians of the Middle Ages and Renaissance and as contributors to the society of the 21st century.

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“A Single Body”: Eucharistic Piety and Confraternities of the Body of Christ in Sixteenth-Century Italy: Texts, Images, and Devotion

Danilo Zardin

1 Introduction

The Eucharistic sacrifice, that is, the re-enactment of the passion and death of Christ that makes him present in the form of consecrated food available to the community of the faithful is the central point of cohesion that allows the Christian community to come together as a single body. By sharing in the communion table, the faithful bind themselves to the reality of the Son of God made man and become the “members,” that is, the interconnected parts, of the communion of the Church understood as a living organism. The nuclei of theological thinking that can be extracted from the Gospels or the letters of the Apostle Paul already describe it. The Church Fathers of the early centuries underline it and the teachers that followed them in the faith carried this legacy forward. From a historical perspective, recent studies have focused once again on this unifying dimension of the cult of the Eucharist, capable, since the beginning, of drawing individuals together as a community. The value of the mass as a “social institution” was underlined by John Bossy who pointed out that the role of the sacrament coincides with the impact that liturgical gestures and formulas have on the mentality and the lived lives of those who celebrate the liturgy.¹ If “the Word was made flesh” (John 1:14, KJV) and this supernatural flesh can become nourishment for everyone, this means that the body and blood of the divine being enters into the fabric of the human reality with which it fuses together. This “mystery” of the Eucharist is thus interwoven with the relationships and conflicts people establish among themselves and places itself at the centre of a complex of visible signs called to serve as a vehicle of communication between earth and heaven. This explains why the

¹ John Bossy, “The Mass as a Social Institution, 1200–1700,” *Past and present* 100 (1983): 29–61. More generally, John Bossy, *Christianity in the West. 1400–1700* (Oxford: 1985).

Eucharist never remained a fact of pure doctrine, but entered into the ceremonial practices of the collective, into the heritage of popular devotion, into the theatre of sacred representations, and into the universe of music and art created to support medieval and early modern piety.² It is thus natural that the history of confraternities should also cross paths with the centrality of the Eucharist, especially since the Eucharist established itself as the foremost expression of the Christian cult.

This was one of the reasons for the clash with the Protestant Reformation and one of the results. Protestantism demolished the structure of religious associations founded on the pluralistic participation of the laity and replaced it with a more vertical and sacralised model for the relationship with the divine. For Catholics the Eucharist became the Most Holy Sacrament, raised high as a banner to be worshipped, the central element of the visible presence of Christ who gathers and protects his true followers, in the context of a Christian world torn apart by confessional struggles for control of a bitterly contested truth. The Catholic system of confraternities—closely tied to the network of parishes managed by the clergy who administered the sacraments and who controlled access to the saving grace of redemption—used the Eucharist as its privileged axis of operation. At the same time, the more traditional aspects of the “memorial” of the sufferings inflicted on the body of Christ were re-thought and re-oriented in a new way.

This article will examine some of the more significant reflections of this new development by focusing on Milan and Lombardy in the early 16th century. At the same time, it will integrate this local reality into the broader Italian context and the early modern “rewriting” of the confraternal tradition. More specifically, it will examine the elaboration of religious discourse (confraternity statutes, devoted literature) in relation with the production of images that were the visually explicit manifestation of this discourse.³

2 Milan at the Beginning of the 16th Century

Capital of a princely state ruled by the Sforza family, at the end of the 15th century Milan became embroiled in the struggles between the two major powers of Europe for supremacy in the continent. In 1499 the French invaded, ousted

2 Miri Rubin, *Corpus Christi. The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: 1991).

3 Danilo Zardin, “Beyond Crisis: Confraternities in Modern Italy between the Church and Lay Society,” in *Faith's Boundaries. Laity and Clergy in Early Modern Confraternities*, (eds.) Nicholas Terpstra, Adriano Prosperi and Stefania Pastore (Turnhout: 2012), 331–351. For a general description of the various Italian contexts, see Christopher F. Black, *Italian Confraternities in the Sixteenth Century* (Cambridge: 1989), 95–98.

Duke Lodovico Sforza, and took over the duchy, holding it more or less sporadically until 1535 when Emperor Charles V von Habsburg gained permanent control of it and in 1540 installed his son, Philip, as its duke. In 1556, in the wake of Philip's ascension to the throne of Spain as King Philip II, the duchy of Milan was incorporated into the Iberian crown. Though now politically part of Spain, the city's religious prestige remained, however, intact: Milan was the centre of the largest and most populous diocese in Catholic Europe. In the second half of the 16th century it presented itself as the leading city for the renewal of the Catholic Church in line with the reforms instituted by its cardinal archbishop, Carlo Borromeo (r. 1564–1584), in the immediate wake of the Council of Trent.

In this urban context, one of the foremost in contemporary Europe, the presence of confraternities dedicated to the cult of the Eucharist is documented, with some certainly, only from the last decades of the 14th century. We find a *societas Corporis Christi* in the ancient cathedral of Santa Tecla in Milan in 1372, but we must wait until 1498 to find a second Eucharistic confraternity in the city, this time at the prestigious church of San Lorenzo Maggiore. In the more important towns of the duchy, as well, we find *scole* of the Body of Christ starting only in the 1370s–80s. Eucharistic confraternities finally begin to impose themselves only in the full Renaissance when the city and the duchy pass into foreign hands. In the first decade of the 16th century a *scola Sacratissimi Corporis Domini Nostri Iesu Christi* is established in the church of San Giorgio al Palazzo, near the cathedral, and soon gains the protection of the major civic authorities in the duchy.⁴ In the following decades, we find a growing number of similar confraternities; they will reach a peak in the post-Tridentine period.

The growth of confraternities in this period is closely connected to developments in the religious mentality that permeated the milieus where they took root. Such a mentality expressed itself primarily through preaching and the educational models it proposed for the laity, the clergy, and the religious orders. We see these in the texts they were reading, the images that visually fixed these religious messages on the walls of their places of worship or filtered into domestic spaces, and in the decorative devices of books and prints disseminated to support the piety of the faithful.

In Milan, a striking kinship connects the growth of Eucharistic confraternities with other devout associations that privilege a devotional system focused on the more painful aspects of Christian mysteries. By relying on the experience of physically identifying with the sufferings of the Passion, the faithful could arrive at the source from which all the benefits of divine charity flowed:

4 The available data is examined in Danilo Zardin, "Solidarietà di vicini. La confraternita del Corpo di Cristo e le compagnie devote di S. Giorgio al Palazzo tra Cinque e Settecento," *Archivio storico lombardo* 118 (1992): 361–404, especially 371–380.

Christ. Inexhaustible and available to everyone, Christ was made available through the sacrament of the Eucharist. The clearest example of this rise in this emotional and perceptible Christocentric piety can be seen in the confraternity of the Santa Corona (Sacred Crown) in Milan at the turn of the 15th and 16th centuries. The confraternity, aligned with the Dominican order, promoted devotion to the suffering inflicted on the human body of Christ by tending to the suffering bodies of the poor and destitute in the city. Its headquarters were in the buildings next to the church of Santo Sepolcro and its chapel in the new Dominican church of Santa Maria delle Grazie. The chapel needed to reflect the elevated social ranks of its users, so between 1540 and 1542 the confraternity did not hesitate to hire two of the most esteemed painters in northern Italy, Titian and Gaudenzio Ferrari, to paint the scenes Christ's passion. Titian painted their name-sake event, *The Crowning with Thorns* (1542–43), now at the Louvre; it is considered to be one of the most moving religious works of the Italian Renaissance. Ferrari frescoed a Flagellation, an Ecce Homo and a Crucifixion on the side walls and angels with instruments of the Passion on the vaults. But Titian and Ferrari were not the first important artists to work for the confraternity: already twenty years earlier the Santa Corona had called upon another major painter, the Lombard Bernardino Luini, to decorate its meeting hall in the city centre with a great fresco depicting the crowing with thorns.⁵

Bernardino Luini is an important piece in our Eucharistic puzzle. Some years earlier, also the members of the Milanese confraternity of San Giorgio al Palazzo had turned to him for the total renovation of their chapel. Luini painted a series of panels depicting the major moments of Christ's passion, from the flagellation and the crowing with thorns to the crucifixion. Then, on the far wall and right above the altar, he brought the visual narrative to a worthy conclusion with a panel showing Mary's lament over the body of Jesus taken down from the cross—the Pietà was, after all, at the centre of religious art in the 14th and 15th centuries (fig. 6.1).⁶

5 Danilo Zardin, "Una devozione condivisa: Santa Corona, i domenicani e le Grazie tra Quattro e Cinquecento," in *Il convento di Santa Maria delle Grazie a Milano. Una storia dalla fondazione a metà del Cinquecento*, (eds.) Stefania Buganza and Marco Rainini (Florence: 2017), 125–143.

6 Giulio Cesare Sacchi, *Stato della veneranda, ed insigne confraternita del Santissimo Sacramento, eretta nella collegiata chiesa di S. Giorgio in Palazzo di Milano* (Milan: 1652), esp. 8. For the artistic aspects of the chapel's decorations, see Angela Ottino Della Chiesa, *Bernardino Luini* (Novara: 1956), 108–109 and figures 30–37. See also *Bernardino Luini e i suoi figli. Itinerari*, (eds.) Giovanni Agosti, Rossana Sacchi and Jacopo Stoppa (Milan: 2014), 112–121. For the genesis and typical characteristics of the iconographic tradition, see Hans Belting, *The Image and Its Public in the Middle Ages: Form and Function of Early Paintings of the Passion* (New Rochelle, NY: 1990).



FIGURE 6.1 Bernardino Luini, *Scenes of the Passion and Complaint on the Body of the Dead Christ*. (1516) Milan, San Giorgio al Palazzo, Chapel of the Confraternity of the Body of Christ.

PHOTO: SCALPENDI EDITORE.

When Eucharistic confraternities were first established, the reality of the “Most Sacred Sacrament” was not seen as absolutely separate from the materiality of the human body of Christ. “Sacrament” and “Body of Christ” were one and the same thing, two poles that referred back to each other and found in the consecrated host their point of highest attraction. This explains why the *confratelli*’s iconographical choice is not exceptional: in the early 16th century, this was the most logical choice for a confraternity of the Body of Christ that had the economic means and organisational capacities to undertake such an ambitious decorative project. In trusting the work to Bernardino Luini, the confraternity of San Giorgio al Palazzo was following in the path of other Eucharistic confraternities of their time, both near and far, who adhered to the stereotypes of Renaissance sacred art in the representation of the figure of Christ. It also adhered to the major points of religious pedagogy that sought to present the emotionally engaging and directly experienced “memory” of the culminating moments in the course of the redemptive mission of the Son of God. Similar iconographic choices made by other confraternities of the Body of Christ in many other locations in northern Italy in the first two or three decades of the 16th century confirm this.

3 “Remembering” the Passion of the Body of Christ

The beginnings of the spread of Eucharistic confraternities is well documented in very detailed records of pastoral visitations from the city of Bergamo, the capital of the westernmost district of Venetian Lombardy. Its confraternity of Sant’Alessandro in Colonna was already active in the first decade of the 16th century. Starting in 1518, its administrators undertook a complete rebuilding program for the confraternity’s headquarters that included a highly theatrical set of evocative images that revolved around the sacredness of the supreme figure of Christ the Saviour. The over-all design presented a “very tender” spectacle that hinged on the realistic procession of “small standing out terracotta figures” within a framework consisting of “small stories, also in terracotta, all around.”⁷ We do not know exactly what this staging represented, but it must have been tied to the cycle of the Passion to which the altar was dedicated and served as a sort of ideal reconstruction of the sepulchre of Christ. The final and central element in this imposing devotional iconography was the altarpiece by

7 “Molto affettuoso”; “figurette de terra cotta tutte tonde”; “istoriette pur in piera cotta in quadri a torno.” Francesca Cortesi Bosco, “La letteratura religiosa devozionale e l’iconografia di alcuni dipinti di L. Lotto,” *Bergomum* 70 (1976): 3–25, see 16–18 and figs. 2–4.

Lorenzo Lotto, one of the foremost artists of the 16th century. Completed by January 1524, it depicts the lament at the foot of the cross, with the weeping figures of Mary, the pious women, and the few disciples who had remained behind to honour the lifeless body of the Divine Teacher. The work is contemporaneous with other panels on the Passion, such as Lotto's polyptych for the confraternity of the Body of Christ in nearby Ponteranica (1522), where the powerful figure of the resurrected Christ shows his wounds to the faithful while his redeeming blood flows into the Eucharistic chalice at his feet.⁸

A second example comes from Brescia, the other diocese in Venetian Lombardy. Just a few years before the Luini and Lotto commissions we just discussed, the members of the confraternity of the Body of Christ in the church of San Giovanni Evangelista placed on the altar of their chapel in the church a *Complaint* now attributed to the Lombard artist Bernardo Zenale, that shows Christ being prepared to be placed into the tomb. In 1509 they provided a sumptuous wooden frame for it and then, in 1521–1524, commissioned a complete cycle of didactic depictions of the mystery of the Eucharist by other famous Lombard artists such as Girolamo Romanino and Alessandro Bonvicino called il Moretto. The celebratory apparatus was brought to a conclusion by a sequence of ingenious symbolic combinations that connected the Old Testament prefigurations of the Eucharist with the Last Supper and then, moving on from here, showed the beneficial effects of divine assistance through the miracles and exemplary deeds of Jesus on behalf of the spiritual nourishment of the soul, the healing from sin, and the reassuring accumulation of indulgences.⁹ Finally, already in 1501, at the beginning of the spread of iconographic programs sponsored by confraternities of the Body of Christ in the

8 Danilo Zardin, "In su la croce con amare pene.' La pietà delle confraternite del Corpo di Cristo a Bergamo e nella Lombardia del Cinquecento," in *Bergamo. L'altra Venezia. Il Rinascimento negli anni di Lorenzo Lotto. 1510–1530*, (ed.) Francesco Rossi (Milan: 2001), 240. See also Francesca Cortesi Bosco, "I coniugi di Lotto all'Ermitage e la loro 'impresa,'" in *Studi per Pietro Zampetti*, (ed.) Ranieri Varese (Ancona: 1993), 336–349, and Francesca Cortesi Bosco, "La 'Pietà' di Lotto 'opera molto affettuosa,'" in *Lorenzo Lotto. Il Compianto sul Cristo morto: studi, indagini, problemi conservativi* (Cinisello Balsamo: 2002), 11–35.

9 Giovanni Vezzoli, "L'arte nella chiesa," in *San Giovanni in Brescia* (Brescia: 1975), 1: 43–107: 60–62, 90–91. Zenale e Leonardo. *Tradizione e rinnovamento della pittura lombarda* (Milan: 1982), 178–180. Giovanni Testori, *Romanino e Moretto alla cappella del Sacramento* (Brescia: 1975). Valerio Guazzoni, *Moretto. Il tema sacro* (Brescia: 1981), 23–24. Valerio Guazzoni, "Temi religiosi e contenuti devozionali," in *Pittura del Cinquecento a Brescia* (Milan: 1986), 17–31: 24–25. Barbara Maria Savy, "Manducatio per visum." *Temi eucaristici nella pittura di Romanino e Moretto* (Cittadella: 2006).

Lombard/Venetian area, there was a Pietà, now lost, by Vincenzo Foppa in the chapel of the confraternity of the Body of Christ in the Duomo in Brescia.¹⁰

It is important to underline that the confraternity's visual representations of the reason for their existence cannot be explained as independent elaborations within a restricted local context. Even if the people who gathered into confraternities were not always culturally well equipped or part of a leading social circle, it was inevitable that in coming to a decision about the decorative programs for their chapels they would rely on the knowledge of experts in the figurative arts who were trained to follow the devotional directions of the world in which they operated. Artists could certainly not act independently and improvise in a revolutionary way—they had to be interpreters of the needs and underpinnings of contemporary religious pedagogy which they received both from oral teachings and edifying literature. The confraternities that commissioned these works and the technicians and artists who carried them out moved in a cultural landscape where they met clergy from parish and diocesan circles, masters and chaplains from various religious orders, read written works replete with spiritual advice and Christian doctrine. The background to keep in mind is always that of an extensive circulation of ideas that were translated into iconographic language, with a constant and intense interchange between high and low, centre and periphery, clerical and secular world.

The turning point was marked, shortly after the mid 13th century, by the introduction of the feast of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ (*Corpus Domini* or *Corpus Christi*). This was reinforced by the multiplication of miracles produced by the affirmation of faith in the consecrated bread and wine and the need, constantly reaffirmed, to emphasise their adoration and their collective enjoyment, even outside the celebration of the mass. Since then, Eucharistic confraternities served as one of the means to channel support for this cult that was to become the central axis of modern Catholicism. From the very beginning they devoted themselves to guaranteeing the decorum due to the sacrament and to the rite of consecration in the liturgy. They did this by taking care of the consecrated host; the proper lighting of the tabernacle and the altar by providing oil and wax for the lamps that signalled the location of the Body of Christ in the church; they escorted the sacrament in procession on various occasions, more or less spectacular, that were part of the collective calendar. Often they extended their duties by assuming the care for the building that housed their chapel or altar; buildings that more and more often tended to coincide with the parish church, starting with the cathedral itself. But we must not forget that all these functions were part of an open

10 Guazzoni, *Moretto*, 22.

relationship, often kept in full view, between the cult of the Eucharist and the memorial drive to support the faithful re-enactment of the sacrifice to which the physical body of Christ was subjected; Christ's body that was made usable to the faithful through the priest's sacramental rites at the altar table with the offering of the bread and wine as the material sign of the presence of God among men and women.

The connection between these two aspects—the Eucharistic side and the “memorial” side of the Passion at the source of the “Most Holy Sacrament”—was already present in the earliest statutes of confraternities of the Body of Christ from the late Middle Ages.¹¹ It then transferred naturally into those of the most prestigious Eucharistic sodality of the early modern period—the confraternity of the Santissimo Sacramento founded in 1539 in the Dominican church of Santa Maria sopra Minerva in Rome.¹² Endowed with an enormous force of attraction, this confraternity was able to rise above all other such organisations, even those outside Rome, and assert itself as the privileged point of reference among the growing number of confraternities of the Body of Christ in the Catholic world, thereby becoming the mother-house through which, by aggregation, all other Eucharistic confraternities could share in the enviable treasury of privileges and indulgences it had received from popes and cardinals alike. Thanks to its leading position, the Santissimo Sacramento at Santa Maria sopra Minerva also contributed to the standardisation of devotional practices and management structures of other Eucharistic confraternities.

From the very proem to the 16th-century statutes of the Santissimo Sacramento at Santa Maria sopra Minerva, the structural characteristics of the organisation are described in exemplary terms. The major obligation of members was to distinguish themselves in revering, “with every effort [...] and most devout ceremonies [...], that ultimate and immense sacrament of the most holy body and blood of our Saviour messer Jesus Christ that, at the last supper, when he was about to go from this world to the Father, He left us in the form of bread and wine.”¹³ But the homage paid to the sacrament was immediately

11 Giuseppe Barbiero, *Le confraternite del Santissimo Sacramento prima del 1539* (Vedelago: 1944).

12 On the founding and characteristics of the confraternity, see Luigi Fiorani, “L’esperienza religiosa nelle confraternite romane tra Cinque e Seicento,” in *Ricerche per la storia religiosa di Roma* (Rome: 1984), 5: 155–196: 169–172. Its 16th-century statutes are published in Barbiero, *Le confraternite del Santissimo Sacramento*, 269–286.

13 “Con ogni studio [...] et con devotissime cerimonie [...] quel sommo et immenso sacramento del santissimo corpo et sangue del Salvator nostro messer Giesù Christo, il qual’egli nell’ultima cena, essendo per passare da questo mondo al Padre, ci lasciò sotto spetie di pane et vino.” Barbiero, *Le confraternite del Santissimo Sacramento*, 269.

grafted unto the evocation of a much broader devotional scenario dominated by the centrality of the passion and the death on the cross that Christ's human body had to undergo in order to make the treasury of divine mercy accessible.

For this is that most sweet and most holy memorial in which we celebrate the memory of that abundant charity our Lord showed in his passion for all human beings. This is why the apostle Paul says that every time we eat this bread and drink from this chalice we announce the death of the Lord until he returns at the final judgement. This is the memorial whereby we are drawn away from evil and confirmed in goodness, constantly gaining in virtue and in God's graces, and in which we are spiritually nourished with the bodily presence of our Saviours himself. Oh, truly worthy remembrance, never ever to be omitted, with which we celebrate the death of our death, and which, like the living wood attached to the wood of the cross, brought us the fruit of our salvation.¹⁴

4 "To See" with the Eyes of the Mind and the Heart

The exaltation of the Eucharist as a "memorial" was the keystone of the beliefs and practices developed over time around the hierarchical primacy of the body of Christ. The celebration of the liturgy remained its privileged setting in the Catholic world, but it is clear that, at the same time, it easily lent itself to being applied to the physical sign that, for Catholics, represented the continuity of the *corpus mysticum* of Christ the Redeemer. In becoming physical, the sacramental sign could be extrapolated from the liturgy's collective actions and transform itself in object of an independent veneration tied to the representative *virtus* of the consecrated host.

14 "Imperoché questo è quel dolcissimo et santissimo memoriale, nel quale si celebra la ricordanza di quella eccessiva charità, la quale il Signor nostro nella sua passione dimostrò verso l'humana generatione. Perciò dice l'apostolo Paolo, ogni volta che noi mangiamo questo pane, et bevemo il calice, annuntiamo la morte del Signore, fin che esso venghi al giuditio universale. Questo è quel memoriale, nel quale noi siamo ritratti dal male, et confirmati nel bene, facendo continuo profitto nelle virtù, et rendimenti di gratie a Dio, et nel quale spiritualmente siamo reficiati con la corporale presentia di esso nostro Salvatore. Oh veramente degna ricordanza, et non mai per alcun tempo da essere pretermessa, nella quale celebriamo la morte della nostra morte, et come il vivace legno attaccato al legno della croce ha portato a noi il frutto della nostra salute." Barbiero, *Le confraternite del Santissimo Sacramento*, 269–270.

The inflections to which the robust legacy of a tradition that had planted firm roots at the turn of the 15th and 16th centuries could bend themselves are coloured by the play of references that, within the framework of communication in the religious universe of the early modern period, connected the production of discourses and the elaboration of images around the Eucharistic matter, with conspicuous and inevitable effects of mutual contamination. At the beginning of the devotional path of Eucharistic confraternities we find a point of view expressed in a suggestive collection of meditations and treatises on the body of Christ in part authored by the Veronese humanist and canon regular of the Lateran, Paolo Maffei (1380–1452) and in part containing much earlier texts. First printed in Venice in 1498 and then again in 1500, this is a particularly valuable document because it is probably the oldest printed text on Eucharistic themes available in Italian.¹⁵ The *incipit* reads: “Here begins the treatise of the holy sacrament of the body of Christ written by a servant of God for the prioress and sisters of the monastery of San Daniele di Castello in Venice.”¹⁶ This is, clearly, a work intended as an aid for the partaking of the sacrament by devout nuns in a convent; it is not intended for the laity in confraternities. One can, however, reasonably assume that the contents did circulate, in simplified format, and that they reflected the language generally used in religious instruction at the time even outside conventual or monastic circles. Edifying texts such as this one echoed and reinforced the same messages that were being disseminated orally. In devout circles, the words of preachers were repeated by a multitude of users and interpreters. Those words joined with the texts to become the object of an imitative appropriation that was part of a shared legacy, mixing with suggestions coming from the presence, everywhere, of images of all sorts. The move from oral to written dissemination is

15 *Questa devota et molto utile opereta come zardin de infiniti suavissimi et redolenti fiori contien in sì melliflua et saluberrima meditation contemplante el sacratissimo sacramento del corpo del nostro redemptor Christo Iesù. Con el modo dela institution de quello. Dechiarendo chi son quelli che son tenuti et obligati a riceverlo. Et qual preparation necessaria che preceda. Qual utilità et dono conseguisse l'homo per lo receiver de tanto sacramento. Anchor qual pena et danno incorre color che receve quello over recusa over indignamente presume. Azonzendo chi son quelli che sono indegni receiver tanto sacramento. Dapoi parla della confession. Ultimo loco contien un tractadello de comunione devotissimo. Composto per lo venerando padre Paulo veronese singular servo di Dio* (Venice: 1498). See Anne Jacobson Schutte, *Printed Italian Vernacular Religious Books, 1465–1550: a Finding List* (Geneva: 1983), 253. I deal more extensively with the contents of this collection in one of my forthcoming works.

16 “Incomincia el tract[at]o del sancto sacramento del corpo de Christo. Scripto per uno servo de Dio alla priora et suore del monasterio di San Daniele di Castello in Venetia.” *Questa devota et molto utile opereta*, fol. 2r.

richly evidenced in the treatises of the Eucharistic miscellany, but the reverse could also hold—from writing to oral mediation. What remains fundamental, however, are the connections that linked these various media firmly with each other.

If we look at the *Tractato del sancto sacramento* that opens the 1498 edition we are immediately impressed by the ways in which it insists on the central idea that the Eucharist was instituted by Jesus exactly “as a memorial of his death and passion” (fol. 2r). We are clearly within the classical tradition founded on the New Testament texts that the liturgy has placed at the core of the consecration ritual (in particular, 1 Cor. 11:24, “This is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me” KJV). The *Tractato* then offers specific instructions on the criteria for correct frequency in the partaking of the sacrament, on appropriate preparations for it, on the positive results that come from it, but also on the “twelve detriments and most dangerous harms the soul incurs when it partakes of the sacrament unworthily” (fol. 4r). It presents the five parts that constitute “the fruitful meditation on the sacrament of the body of Christ” and the devout reader ought to follow in order to develop an intense “consideration” on a single dominant image: that of “Christ on the cross with his five wounds” (fol. 4r). The “mellifluous and delectable meditations” (fol. 5v) inspired by this, full of emotion and evocative imagination, are also each time introduced by an edifying poetical composition that can be sung like a lauda.

In the wake of a tradition dear to a more successful ascetic and mystical literature, the devout reader is encouraged to “rush” to the cross (fol. 9r) and plunge into the wounds that tear the divine body apart. References to the wounds and the copious flowing of blood mount. The aim is to create a feeling of intimate and heart-felt identification with the suffering of “that meekest lamb nailed to the cross, but not without many tears” (fol. 5v), a feeling that “inflamm[e]” the heart (fol. 5v) and transforms it, or rather, draws the entire person of the enamoured devotee. The main and only path to follow is to place oneself in front of a vision of the wounded body of Christ, a vision that is to be revived as if there were a real, suffering body in front of it. This very physical and concrete love for the person that is Christ, which the sacrament has the obligation to “alight” and make the devotee “taste,” is not an easy, automatic achievement: the “most gentle sweetness” of such “a solemn sacrament” can be experienced only by returning to the “prayers” pronounced and the religious acts performed at the source from which even repeated access to the Eucharistic sacrament derives its complete meaning (fol. 5rv). This source cannot be anything else but the force of “memory”: one must always start from the intimately assimilated considerations of all the gifts God has showered on mankind through the

heroic love of his Son, gifts that culminated in “the benefit of redemption [...], that is, of the death and passion of this Saviour of ours, Jesus Christ” (fol. 5r).

At the end of the 15th century, when the *Tractato* was published, we were still very much on the other side of the new contexts in which, in response to theological debates with Protestant reformers, the theme of the “benefit” of Christ’s passion would become coloured with nuances and implications that sacrificed it by pressing it onto a polemical, anti-ritualistic direction that criticised the models of mediation with the sphere of the sacred as framed by the liturgical and sacramental traditions of the institutionalised Church.¹⁷ For the primarily female monastic readership to which the texts of the 1498 miscellany addressed themselves, immersion in the *beneficium Christi* was no problem; in fact, it was something to place first and foremost in their perseverance in their many monastic duties. For this reason, one had to let oneself be helped in any way possible. The exercise of “remembering” was the constant undercurrent that spread from the rituals performed as a community to the daily passage of time. It could also be assisted, the text suggests, by the communion the individual was able to spiritually establish, at any time of the day and within all the spaces of one’s daily life, with the body and blood in the Eucharistic sacrament (for a nun, this meant she did not even have to leave her monastery cell). This communion of desire was a very successful way to give effectiveness to a training hypothesised in the *Trattato del sancto sacramento* that uses, in practice, the true and tried methods of an art of memory based on the strength of suggestion of mental images. The mental images could, in turn, draw their inspiration from the physical iconography on which the meditation exercise of the faithful was focused. In the economy of the *Tractato* the visual support that served as a scaffold for the entire structure was, in fact, the image of Christ crucified, with his five wounds in full view. Each of the wounds is matched with one of the five suggested meditations that sought to bring into view (that is, to impress upon the individual) the “five major things in which all the understanding and knowledge of this most sweet sacrament” of the body of Christ consists (fol. 5v), relative to its history, the practical results that come from it, and the normative discipline it calls upon. From the “magnification” of the sacrament the text moves to its institution, to the moment of preparation, to the rewards, and finally to the punishments that will fall upon those who violate the conditions for legitimately and fervently receiving it. Within

17 Carlo Ginzburg and Adriano Prosperi, *Giochi di pazienza. Un seminario sul “Beneficio di Cristo”* (Turin: 1975). See also the different points of view expressed in Luigi Lazzerini, *Teologia del “Miserere.” Da Savonarola al “Beneficio di Cristo.” 1490–1543* (Turin: 2013), and Gabriella Zarri, *Libri di spirito. Editoria religiosa in volgare nei secoli XV–XVII* (Turin: 2009).

this general scheme, every meditation is articulated, in turn, along a range of points that favour personal memorisation; for example, the seven preparations for the sacrament, the twelve useful results that will ensue as a reward, the twelve disadvantages that will ensue from negligence or abuse.

This complex discursive structure was supported by a set of communicative expedients that aroused the reader's mimetic desire, interweaving words to be repeated, prayers, songs, mental representations, and visual images to always keep in front of one's eyes. The structure clearly recycled materials from a previous, solid religious tradition that continued to be formed and fed into the massive offerings of didactic/edifying literature, growing even more extensive in the age of printing. The contact points we can identify in a considerable number of texts, both original or inherited from the flowering of medieval religious thought, shed light on the mentality and devotional practices that served as a basis for the rise of Eucharistic piety in confraternities, constantly gaining ground as the 16th century progressed. The spoken word, the written word, iconographic representations, constantly crossing over each other, were the bedrock that supported a piety that was highly structured theatrically and performatively, that was to be acted out even before it was to be represented or meditated. It was more important to insert oneself as an active protagonist in an dynamic, moving scene brought to life by the mental efforts of a devout imagination, than merely look at a ceremonial event or a set of reified figurative signs relegated to the world outside oneself.¹⁸

The perspective adopted by this type of educational apprenticeship of the devout self pushed the faithful to mentally reconstruct, with the eyes of the imagination and the affections of the heart, the scenes of the sacred narrative that were the object of the meditative exercise and at the basis of the expression of prayer, both individual and collective. This activated a "local" memory that was concretely connected to a "place" recreated in the most realistic terms possible, complete with the faces of people known in real life. In order to heighten the expressive power of the representation, the faithful were to image themselves interacting directly with the actors their the memory scene, as suggested by another successful publication of the late 15th century, the *Giardino di orazione*.¹⁹ We need not focus on this text at the moment—it has enjoyed

18 Ottavia Niccoli, *Vedere con gli occhi del cuore. All'origine del potere delle immagini* (Rome: 2011).

19 *Zardino de oration fructuoso* (Venice: 1494). On this much reprinted work, see Michael Baxandall, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy* (Oxford: 1978), 46–48; Carlo Ginzburg, "Folklore, magia, religione," in *Storia d'Italia*, (eds.) Ruggiero Romano and Corrado Vivanti, vol.1, *I caratteri originali* (Turin: 1972), 601–676: 631–633; and Cortesi Bosco, "La letteratura religiosa devozionale."

plenty of attention from scholars of 15th/16th-century religious culture, though it still needs to be more fully integrated in the vast editorial landscape from which it rose.

5 The Sacrament of the Visible Presence

Within the edifying literature specifically dedicated to the Eucharist, this strongly visual orientation, theatrically and concretely realistic, required that the sacrament celebrated at the altar and the sign of the host raised in the ritual of consecration were to be reconnected with the physical representation of the body of Christ offered by the sacrament. Eucharistic piety thus tended towards a Christocentric perception that aroused the emotions and senses of the faithful, passing from sight to hearing, touch, and so on. However, already within its traditional basis there were different forms of celebratory devices that gave rise to other possible illustrations of the powers of the Eucharist. Starting with the imaginative strand of the “memorial,” the focus of attention could shift to the worship of the sacramental species that made Christ’s body useable to the faithful by means of the communion. The faithful thus moved from the represented mystery to the object that embodied it, and did so in a more symbolic perspective and, in the strong sense of the term, just in a *sacramental* perspective focused on the sign that rendered the signified mystery a participatory act.

As the 16th century progressed, these more strictly Eucharistic dimensions of Christian commemorative piety acquired even greater importance. After the painful trauma of the Reformation, under the impact of the need to close ranks within the Christian world that had remained faithful to Rome, there was an urgency to react, as strongly as possible, to Protestant objections on the value of the mass by emphasizing the primacy of the ecclesiastical hierarchy founded on ordained priesthood. It was necessary to defend the centrality of the dogma of transubstantiation against any reduction of the Eucharistic sacrament to a mere temporary presence of Christ or to a simple “memory” of the unique and unrepeatable supreme sacrifice on the cross. But this parable of “sacramentalisation” of piety and Eucharistic iconography that took over the ever-growing network of confraternities of the Body of Christ did nothing more than accentuate devotional orientations, tied to their specific iconographic choices, that had existed long before the anti-Protestant turn. Closely related to the basic logic of the “memorial,” these different outcomes often superseded all other to become the preferred ones.

A revealing clue is the appearance, already at the end of the 15th century, of the self-representation of Eucharistic confraternities as honour guards to the

sacrament carried in procession as Viaticum to the dying faithful, as we see in Milan, Brescia, and elsewhere.²⁰ In Brescia, the religious iconography of confraternities and of altars of the Most Holy Sacrament also saw, very early on, the option of directly celebrating the sacrament as such (more than the memory of Christ's passion). Starting from the foundational moment of Christ's last supper, the faithful could survey the many symbolic prefigurations of the Eucharist along the entire arch of salvation history, stopping as they wished on the more famous miracles that a religious sensibility in love with the extraordinary attributed to the Eucharist, the privileged venue for the manifestation of the power of God in history.²¹

The parameters within which artists, commissioners, and devout groups moved in the years before the Tridentine reforms were, thus, quite wide. There was no need to choose between mutually exclusive figurative models. At times, different results overlapped along the range of all available solutions. Instead of falling into hybrid compromises, they ended up emphasizing the connections that linked them together or, in other words, the mutual mirroring of symbolic references by virtue of which the celebration of the prestige of the Eucharist was associated with the more or less explicit re-enactment of the redemptive sacrifice on the cross. In this way one returned to the devotional pivot of compassion for the dead Christ deposited from the cross and his wounded body. The theme of the concealment of the sacred body in the sepulchre could, for example, feed into the idea of another concealment constituted by the consecrated host that held, within it, the body of Christ. The tabernacle itself could also become a supporting symbol for the non-renounceable principle of the "memorial." For the same purpose, one could insert in the predella of a panel or on the top lunette of an altarpiece of the Christ's complaint an image of the Last Supper, or of a monstrance, with adoring angels at the sides, or the figure of a pelican feeding its young with its own torn flesh.²²

The game of cross-references between the mystery of the Eucharist and the sacrifice on the cross could become even more inextricably linked as the

20 Marina Mojana, "Il Quattrocento," in *La basilica di San Lorenzo in Milano* (Milan: 1985), 183. Danilo Zardin, "Le confraternite bresciane al tempo della visita apostolica di san Carlo Borromeo," in *San Carlo Borromeo e Brescia* (Rovato: 1987), 123–151: 125.

21 Guazzoni, *Moretto*, 51 and 119 (ill. 23) (Melchisedech's offering of bread and wine in San Clemente and in the chapel of the Sacrament in the old Duomo in Brescia; the manna in the desert, Elijah fed by the angel, the sacrifice of Isaac, the traditional Hebrew paschal banquet with the lamb; see 37, 97). See also Moretto's *Supper at Emmaus* (*Pittura del Cinquecento a Brescia*, 26, 91, 183–184). For the iconography of the Last Supper, see Marco Rossi and Alessandro Rovetta, *Il cenacolo di Leonardo. Cultura domenicana, iconografia eucaristica e tradizione lombarda* (Ivrea: 1988).

22 *Pittura del Cinquecento a Brescia*, 108 and 187.

two themes join together in the figurative arrangement of a single composition. For example, in Romanino's *The Mass of Saint Apollonio* (c.1525) in the church of Santa Maria in Calchera, in Brescia, we see a group of confraternity members about to receive communion from the officiating (a 4th-century bishop of Brescia); behind them, the altarpiece panel presents the viewer with a complaint over the dead body of Christ.²³ Another example comes from Romanino's lunette of *The Mass of Saint Gregory* (1521–24) in the Chapel of the Sacrament in the church of San Giovanni Evangelista, again in Brescia; at the centre of the image we see a brilliantly radiant child Jesus with his side pierced standing on top of the chalice placed on the altar right under a richly elaborate crucifix.²⁴ The altarpiece panels painted by Alessandro Bonvicino, called il Moretto, for the confraternities of the Body of Christ in two nearby towns, Castenedolo and Marmentino (c.1540–1545), are even more disarming in their direct simplicity. The central element in both is the monstrance placed on an altar adorned with refined paraments and between lit chandeliers. In both panels the sacrament in the monstrance is being adored by the patron saints of the community who, in so doing, invite the faithful to do the same. And in both panels the semi-naked figure of the risen Christ floats, with symbols of the Passion around him, above the monstrance.²⁵ In all these cases, then, the Eucharist is presented as the vehicle of complete communion with the divinity, a communion that is reinforced by the intense application of the interior senses of the faithful to the desire to join with the martyred body of the sacrificial Victim behind the veil of the consecrated host.

6 Towards the Primacy of the Eucharistic Sacrament

With Moretto's two panels for minor churches in the countryside around Brescia we enter a new phase for the history of the Eucharistic confraternities, where suspicion, rigidity, and new doctrinal demands connected with the Counter-Reformational turn that was taking shape in the Church began to play a part. It is worth noting that, behind the commissions of the two panels for Castenedolo and Marmentino, stood the figure of Donato Savallo, the archpriest of the Duomo in Brescia, who also happened to be the titular priest of the two countryside parishes. Savallo was closely involved, with the mid-century bishops of Brescia, in efforts to relaunch clerical control over local

23 *Pittura del Cinquecento a Brescia*, 24, 185–186.

24 See especially, Guazzoni, "Temi religiosi," 25.

25 Guazzoni, *Moretto*, 49–51, 104–107; *Pittura del Cinquecento a Brescia*, 25–26, 30, 157, 199.

religious life and, in 1542, in the struggle against heretical infiltrations into the diocese.

In the new religious climate of the Catholic Reformation, it was clear that the traditional tone of the iconographic repertoire of Eucharistic confraternities—with its firm connection between the piety of the “complaint” and the “remembering” focused on the sufferings of the Passion—had to fade into the background. In the eyes of the most strenuous defenders of Catholic doctrine, rigidly defined, such a tendency could be seen to be inadequate, dangerously open to distortion in its impact on the wider public of the faithful. It was thus necessary to find a way to respond to alternative proposals advanced both by the anti-sacramental spiritualism of the transalpine Reformation and by the remnants of a religious dissent that had arisen in Lombardy in the mid 16th century. These new proposals were in favour a more strongly individualised faith in Christ that would be devoid of additions and mediations, simplified in its forms, and wary of any external obligations.²⁶

As the Counter-Reformation advanced, Eucharistic confraternities throughout the world were called upon to bring the celebration of the presence of the real body and blood of Christ in the sacramental bread and wine back into the foreground and to make it the centre of the public cult of the community of believers. In fulfilling their charge to bring the “mystery” of the Eucharist back to the forefront of the faithful’s paths to salvation, confraternities of the Most Holy Sacrament spread everywhere and gained a truly noticeable consensus among the faithful. Over time, their widespread diffusion, even into peripheral areas, diluted the devotional thrusts that had accompanied their original flowering in urban areas in the 15th and early 16th centuries. Their original drive was attenuated, emptied of some of its most demanding contents and more refined substance, and so reduced to a more flattened dimension. Their reference to the physicality of the Christocentric memorial became somewhat clouded, though not completely lost.²⁷

26 Danilo Zardin, *Confraternite e vita di pietà nelle campagne lombarde tra '500 e '600. La pieve di Parabiago–Legnano* (Milan: 1981). Danilo Zardin, “Confraternite e comunità nelle campagne milanesi fra Cinque e Seicento,” *La scuola cattolica* 112 (1984): 698–732.

27 Angelo Torre, *Il consumo di devozioni. Religione e comunità nelle campagne dell’Ancien Régime* (Venice: 1995). Edoardo Grendi, “Le compagnie del SS. Sacramento a Genova,” *Annali della Facoltà di Giurisprudenza di Genova* 4 (1965): 453–480. Mario Fanti, “Le Compagnie del Santissimo Sacramento a Bologna,” in *Eucaristia e vita dal Medioevo ad oggi a Bologna* (Bologna: 1988), 53–88. Ronald F.E. Weissman, *Ritual Brotherhood in Renaissance Florence* (New York: 1982): 98–99, 224–234. For extra-Italian contexts, see: Marc Venard, “Qu’est-ce qu’une confrérie de dévotion? Réflexions sur les confréries rouennaises du Saint-Sacrement,” in *Les confréries, l’Église et la cité*, (ed.) Marie-Hélène Froeschlé-Chopard (Grenoble: 1988): 253–261. Marie-Hélène Froeschlé-Chopard, *Espace et sacré en Provence (XVI^e–XX^e siècle). Cultes, images, confréries* (Paris: 1994). Marie-Hélène Froeschlé-Chopard,

The transformation of the ancient name of the confraternities of “The Most Sacred Body of Our Lord Christ” reflect this new horizon. In the wake of the strategies set in place by Carlo Borromeo, the clergy he directed, and his many imitators, all focused on bringing the faithful back into the fold, Eucharistic confraternities became the obligatory point of junction in the reorganisation of parish structure. In time, the Eucharistic confraternities came to be known, quite simply, as confraternities “of the Most Holy Sacrament,” with no need for any further specifications—a sign of how they were adapting to the new climate. The change in emphasis is clear: they moved from reality represented as a sign (the body of Christ) to the veneration of a material object (the host) that was deemed to be the recipient of reverential respect from the faithful. This change in an associative scheme that was meant to be universal accompanied the “sacramental” model far beyond the initial thrust of Tridentine reforms: it was a phenomenon of very long duration that soon proved to be irreversible.²⁸

It comes as no surprise that we can find elements of this evolution in the iconography of the confraternities of the Body of Christ, from their developmental stage in the early 16th century until their post-Tridentine revival as more liturgical and parish-based organisations. The figurative schemes that led back to the more traditional nucleus of stories of Christ’s passion, such as the complaint at the foot of the cross or the adoration of the risen Christ with his five wounds, now needed to undergo some fine-tuning. Attention shifted towards the more obvious Eucharistic themes that invited the faithful to reproduce the actions by which the Son of God instituted the ritual of the consecration of the bread and the wine at the altar. Of this bread and wine, otherwise, they could exalt the high sacredness and powerful thaumaturgic efficacy or their strong tendency to perform miracles, and they were resolved to convince the faithful to abandon all scepticism and accept the full reality of the divine presence in the sign of the host of the Most Holy Sacrament.

Dieu pour tous et Dieu pour soi. Histoire des confréries et de leurs images à l’époque moderne (Paris: 2007). Maureen Flynn, “Baroque Piety and Spanish Confraternities,” in *Confraternities and Catholic Reform in Italy, France, and Spain*, (eds.) John Patrick Donnelly and Michael W. Maher (Kirkville: 1999), 233–245.

28 Danilo Zardin, “Radici e storia delle confraternite in terra milanese e lombarda,” in *Confraternite. Fede e opere in Lombardia dal Medioevo al Settecento*, (eds.) Stefania Buganza, Paolo Vanoli and Danilo Zardin (Milan: 2011), 11–41. Danilo Zardin, “Milano spagnola, Milano ‘borromaica,’” in *Milano e le sue associazioni. Cinque secoli di storia cittadina (xvi–xx secolo)*, (eds.) Lucia Aiello, Marco Bascapè and Danilo Zardin (Milan: 2014), 17–31. For the general Italian context, see Danilo Zardin, “Le confraternite in Italia settentrionale fra xv e xviii secolo,” *Società e storia* 10 (1987): 81–137, especially 110–115. Danilo Zardin, “Riscrivere la tradizione. Il mondo delle confraternite nella cornice del rinnovamento cattolico cinque-seicentesco,” in *Studi confraternali: orientamenti, problemi, testimonianze*, (ed.) Marina Gazzini (Florence: 2009), 167–213.

Instead of scenes of the Passion or themes connected with the deposition into the sepulchre, it became always easier to linger on Gospel narratives of the Last Supper or other dinners held in the presence of the Master, all of which could serve as apologetic defences of the Catholic mass, officiated by the priest on behalf of Christ. These elements of symbolic Eucharistic commensality lent themselves to being connected with other, collateral figurative elements, or they could somehow embrace within them references or allusions that led the faithful back to the central element of the redemption wrought by the Passion. Just as an example, in Leonardo da Vinci's *Last Supper* (1490s; Convent of Santa Maria delle Grazie, Milan) the central figure of Jesus assumes, very clearly, the traditional form of the *imago pietatis*. The miracles attributed to the Eucharist became just as popular because they served to corroborate the truth of the real presence of Christ in the host, but also to document the prodigious protective powers of the Eucharistic sign, thereby dispelling any doubt or objection from unbelievers, be they old or new heretics, Jews, or unaware victims of the devious assaults of the devil. By pointing to the saints most venerated by the people, the scenes of adoration of the consecrated host or the edifying communions proposed to the disciplined piety of the faithful became the subject of a cycle of large paintings commissioned by the archconfraternity of the Santissimo Sacramento in the Duomo in Milan in the 17th and 18th century that were to be hung from the church pillars for the celebration of the feast of Corpus Domini (fig. 6.2).²⁹ The Eucharistic confraternity in the city's cathedral had by now become the model for all other sacramental confraternities in the entire diocese.

These artistic-religious developments are echoed elsewhere.³⁰ The array of ephemeral images created for the confraternity of the Santissimo Sacramento in the Duomo in Milan was meant to arouse the devotional fervour of all the faithful, but their message was the same as what appeared on the confraternity's elaborate processional banners of the Baroque period or in the more modest engravings in printed publications. One can see it very well also in the

29 Giorgio Nicodemi, *I quadri dell'Arciconfraternita del SS. Sacramento nel Duomo di Milano* (Milan: 1935).

30 For the area of Como, see *Pane e vino. Tracce del mistero eucaristico nella pittura a Como dal XVI al XVIII secolo*, (eds.) Eugenia Bianchi and Andrea Straffi (Cinisello Balsamo: 2015), 113ff. For Venice, see Stefania Mason Rinaldi, "Hora di nuovo vedesi...": Immagini della devozione eucaristica a Venezia alla fine del Cinquecento," in *Venezia e la Roma dei papi* (Milan: 1987), 171–196; Paolo Sanvito, "Trasformazioni storiche ed iconografiche durante il Cinquecento veneziano sotto l'influsso delle confraternite del Sacramento," in *Brotherhood and Boundaries. Fraternità e barriere*, (eds.) Stefania Pastore, Adriano Prosperi and Nicholas Terpstra (Pisa: 2011), 307–322.



FIGURE 6.2 Pietro Antonio Magatti, *The Virgin Mary Sending the Viaticum to an Infirm Woman*. (c.1730) Milan, Museo Diocesano.

PHOTO: SCALPENDI EDITORE.

series of devotional prints dedicated to the celebration of the “bread of angels” that were intended for private use.³¹

7 Conclusion

In conclusion, one could ask to what extent the modern development of iconographic elements connected with the Tridentine relaunching of confraternities of the Body of Christ finds significant connections with the parallel evolution of contents and aims of Eucharistic piety carried forward in Catholic circles through the diffusion of ideas that influenced the production of these images. To confirm the long journey that led to the full success of Eucharistic confraternities in a truly general sphere, it would suffice to compare the devout treatises in the 1498 Venetian compendium that exhorted readers to partake of communion often with the texts gathered a century later by Nicola Laghi from Lugano, rector of the parish of San Michele al Gallo in Milan, in his highly successful miscellany *Miracoli del Santissimo Sacramento*.³²

First published in 1594 and then reissued many times in the following century, the collection gave much posthumous fame to its compiler. Over time, it was enriched with “noteworthy stories” (*signalate historie*) and “substantial discourses” (*sucosi discorsi*) filled with “weighty sentences” (*gravi sentenze*). Starting with the 1615 edition, the miscellany also contained a *Historia de’ sacri corporali di Daroca* by the Reverend Girolamo Canini from Anghiari and the *Propugnacolo della vera e real presenza di Christo nell’Eucarestia Santissima* by the Reverend Giorgio Polacco. In the prefaces to the reader, Laghi indicates that with this work he sought to keep alive “the true warmth of devotion that one must have for so great a sacrament” and then adds that his principal readers should be “those people who gather in the confraternities of the Most Holy Body of Christ.”³³ The fact that the instructions and *exempla* he gathered were not dead letter is evident in the many points of contact that have recently been noted between the engravings that enriched Laghi’s *Miracoli del Santissimo*

31 *Stendardi processionali delle confraternite promosse da san Carlo*, (ed.) Chiara Buss (Milan: 1984), 20.

32 Nicola Laghi, *Miracoli del Santissimo Sacramento. Nuovamente raccolti e mandati in luce [...] accompagnati con alcune avvertenze, e istruzioni intorno alla comunione, e messa, et altri discorsi utilissimi ad ogni fedel cristiano* (Venice: 1594). The collection was reissued in 1597, 1598, 1599, 1608, 1609, 1612, 1615, 1628, and 1676. See the online catalogue of the Servizio Bibliotecario Nazionale italiano (SBN).

33 “Vero calore della divotione che si dee ad un tanto sacramento”; “coloro che si uniscono nelle confraternitadi del Sacratissimo Corpo di Christo.” Laghi, *Miracoli*, (ed.) 1676, sig. a3r.

Sacramento and border illustrations devoted to the Last Supper and the miracles of the Eucharist present in the frame of the processional banner of Saint Abbondio now on display in the cathedral of the city of Como.³⁴

The banner was commissioned from the painter Pier Francesco Mazzucchi, called il Morazzone, by the confraternity of the Santissimo Sacramento in 1608–09. On the front, the artist painted an image of the city's patron saint, while on the back he painted not a Christocentric scene, but that of a brightly shining monstrance held up by angels. The monstrance was very much in line with the pietism of post-Tridentine Catholic sacred art that sought to proudly display the victorious affirmation of the Eucharistic sacrament. At the same time, this victory that swept away obstacles and scattered all enemies was in danger of becoming impoverished in its devotional content. What it guaranteed was the external framework of a strong continuity in the statutory rules and fundamental associative aims of confraternities of the Most Holy Sacrament that underpinned, with their original calling, the solidarity of the faithful around the central element of the Catholic faith. The ever growing number of faithful that were reached in every diocese across northern Italy by these proposals was, however, being asked to conform to a type of religious practice firmly oriented towards the primacy of the collective liturgical acts that had, as their centre, the honour due to the permanent divine presence in the bread and wine of the sacrament.

The Eucharistic piety of the 17th century was formulated along less articulated and less multidimensional lines than those that had been typical of the visual piety of "remembrance." It moved away from the need to leverage the meditative inclinations to which nuns and scrupulous readers of texts such as the *Tractato del sancto sacramento del corpo di Cristo* had been educated. Piety was reabsorbed into the rituals of solemn masses, revived in lavish processions, reinforced in the litanies recited during the adoration of the host carried triumphantly into the social space or in the supplications of the Forty Hours in the churches. The love for the real presence of the body of Christ was entrenched in the regular observance of sacramental and devotional practices that encouraged the faithful to pour themselves into a lively and constructive commitment to good works.³⁵ With this, the figure of the modern devotee came into being.

Translated by Konrad Eisenbichler

34 *Pane e vino*, 124–127.

35 First documentation in Claudio Gamba, "Per una storia delle confraternite del SS. Sacramento a Bergamo nel '500," *Studi e fonti di storia lombarda* 7 (1987), 13: 84–110. Zardin, "In su la croce con amare pene."

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Confraternities and the Inquisition: For and Against

Christopher F. Black

1 Introduction¹

The interconnections between confraternities and inquisitions start in the 13th century, and thereafter were diverse, intermittent, friendly and hostile. As far as surviving documentary evidence indicates, not many confraternities were involved. Secrecy surrounding many confraternities could cause suspicion from ecclesiastical and civilian authorities, leading to denunciations. Secrecy similarly inhibits knowledge about those confraternities that supposedly assisted the inquisitions. Historians are impeded by the poor survival of both confraternal and inquisitorial records. More is currently known about the inter-connections between confraternities and inquisitions in northern and central Italy than in the Italian south, or in Iberia and the Spanish and Portuguese colonies. Having written books and articles initially on Italian confraternities and later on the Inquisitions in Italy, I have a bias of knowledge and perspective towards them, but advice from colleagues and contacts dealing with Iberia as well as my sampling the historical secondary literature suggests that the interconnections in Iberia have, in fact, been under-studied. This may reflect the lack of information, but also different roles of confraternities and local inquisition tribunals in the Iberian world. The “For” in my sub-title covers those confraternities established to support local inquisitors, often embracing inquisition officials and “familiars”; the “Against” covers those confraternities that were denounced to inquisitors as needing investigation for heretical or suspicious practices, and harbouring religious dissidents. No confraternity deliberately set out to undermine the Inquisition as such, but some did battle to resist intervention and control by a local inquisitor and tribunal.

My concern in this chapter is primarily with the early modern period, from the late 15th to 18th centuries, when the centralised Inquisitions were established in Spain, Portugal, and Rome. However, it is worth first highlighting a

¹ I am very grateful for Elena Sánchez de Madariaga's guidance on matters Spanish, and for Anne Lawrence's questioning and stylistic improvements.

medieval episode and a medieval inquisitor, Peter of Verona, better known as St Peter Martyr (1206–1252). An early disciple of St Dominic, member of the Dominican Order, educated at Bologna university, in 1232 Peter established a lay confraternity specifically to combat heresy. He was created an inquisitor in 1234 and pursued Manicheans and Cathars notably in Rome, Bologna, Florence, Genoa, Milan and Cremona. In April 1252 he was killed by a certain Carino, paid for by Cathars. A year later Pope Innocent IV canonised him. His early confraternity had already generated similar companies, but his martyrdom and recognition as the second patron of the Inquisitions after St Dominic were lasting inspirations for confraternities founded to assist local inquisitors. Many were named after Peter, especially in Iberia from the early 16th century. With a cross prominently displayed on their formal garments, others, as in Italy, were named *Crocesignati*. Peter Martyr had also started confraternities or congregations of the Virgin, as in Milan (1232) and Florence (1245), which were also in part polemical anti-heresy organisations.² Problems over *Crocesignati* confraternities in the 17th century will be discussed below.

2 Reasons Why Confraternities Might Come under Suspicion

Lay confraternities in western Europe had been founded from early days to foster the spiritual life of the laity, to prepare members for a good death and speedy paths to heavenly salvation. Some fostered good works and charitable assistance for poor members and their dependents, possibly influenced by Byzantine concepts of hospitality and Jewish communal solidarity. One would expect church authorities, whether monastic or secular, to look with favour on such confraternities and not be too suspicious. In the early Middle Ages the older religious orders watched over lay confraternal offshoots, but by the 13th century lay confraternities were proliferating, some encouraged by the Dominicans, with limited clerical supervision, employing priests and curates

2 Christopher F. Black, *Italian Confraternities of the Sixteenth Century* (1989; repr. Cambridge: 2003), 26–27, 76–77; Black, “Confraternities and the Italian Inquisitions,” in *Brotherhood and Boundaries. Fraternità e barriere*, eds. Stefania Pastore, Adriano Prosperi and Nicholas Terpstra (Pisa: 2011), 293–305, esp. 294, 299–304; Black, “Confraternite, Italia,” *Dizionario Storico dell’Inquisizione*, [hereafter *DSI*] (eds.) Adriano Prosperi, Vincenzo Lavenia and John Tedeschi, 5 vols., (Pisa: 2009), 1:377–81; N.J. [Norman] Housley, “Politics and Heresy in Italy. Antihetical Crusades, Orders and Confraternities, 1200–1500,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 13 (1982), 193–208; Bruno Fietler, “Pietro Martire,” *DSI* 3:1209–1210; James E. Wadsworth, “Celebrating St Peter Martyr: the Inquisitorial Brotherhood in Colonial Brazil,” *Latin American Historical Review* 12 (2003), 173–227, esp. 174, 183–184.

as and when they were needed for masses or burials. Such independence could upset church leaders. In producing detailed constitutions, Italian confraternities often had clauses enjoining secrecy over their activities and membership, especially if the membership was socially mixed, and members mortified themselves with near-naked flagellation. Such secrecy came to worry secular rulers as much as, or more than, they worried bishops. In addition, most notably in Venice throughout the period, there could be overlaps between confraternities and trade guilds. Political leaders in Milan in the 12th century and in Florence, Bologna, Siena, Naples and Toledo in the 15th to 16th centuries saw confraternities as politically and/or economically dangerous.

On the eve of the Reformation, Florentine confraternities were behaving in ways that would soon earn them condemnation. By the end of the 15th century some were using vernacular Bibles, or parts thereof, and lay members were preaching, including notable figures such as Niccolò Machiavelli, Angelo Poliziano and Giovanni Nesi. When Reformation ideas appeared from the north it was likely that confraternities—deemed to be subversive in the eyes of the authorities—would fall under suspicion, as they did in the 1530s in Siena. Here the leading Capuchin preacher Bernardino Ochino was preaching to confraternities, ahead of fleeing the incipient redeveloped papal Inquisition.³

In such conditions inquisitors took note and investigated, though apparently more from denunciations than from their own pro-active probing. In Iberia, suspicion of confraternities was less likely to be for harbouring Reform ideas, northern or home grown, and more likely to come when confraternities were known to have New Christians and, later, converted Black Africans as members. A study of the *comarca* of Campo de Calatrava reveals that many confraternities had Morisco members. After investigation, inquisitors were ready to attest to their now being good Christians and getting along well with Old Christians.⁴ One would have expected in the Iberian American colonies that some confraternities created for converted native Americans, or ones with mixed membership, would occasion similar suspicion, but this seems not be the case. In Mexico it was clarified that supervision of beliefs and behaviours

3 Christopher F. Black, "Introduction: The Confraternity Context," in *Early Modern Confraternities in Europe and the Americas. International and Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, (eds.) Christopher Black and Pamela Gravestock (Aldershot: 2006), 7–9; Black, *Italian Confraternities*, 40–41, 58–60. Black, "Confraternities and the Italian Inquisitions," 294–295; Konrad Eisenbichler, *The Boys of the Archangel Raphael. A Youth Confraternity in Florence 141–1785* (Toronto: 1998), 180–182; Eisenbichler, "Angelo Poliziano e le confraternite di giovani a Firenze," in *Poliziano nel suo mondo*. (Florence: 1996), 297–308.

4 Trevor J. Dadson, *Tolerance and Coexistence in Early Modern Spain. Old Christians and Moriscos in the Campo de Calatrava* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: 2014), 49–51, 98, 206–224.

in confraternities came under episcopal jurisdiction, and was not the remit of the inquisitor.

3 Early Denunciations of Confraternities to the Italian Inquisitors

As far as the limited surviving evidence indicates, the first serious investigations of confraternities for harbouring new and heterodox ideas take place in the early 1540s. In those years the confraternity of the *Carità* in Udine was reported to be using readings from Antonio Bruccioli's influential translation of the New Testament every first Sunday of the month, along with readings from printed sermons by the heretical Girolamo Savonarola, burned in Florence in 1498. In 1543 a goldsmith in the confraternity of the Trinity in Siena was denounced for attacking the cult of saints and their intercessional powers. At the same time, the top-ranking confraternity of Santa Maria della Vita in Bologna was hearing similar views and attacks on the Virgin and saints by the grocer (*drogherie*) Girolamo Rainaldi, who argued for reliance on Christ alone. He safely recanted.⁵ Recent work by Simonetta Adorni-Braccesi has pointed to the role of a confraternity of San Rocco in Borgolavezzaro, near Novara, in bringing together a range of humanist intellectuals who discussed ideas on Justification. This came to light when the humanist Gaudenzio Merulo, from that place, was tried in Milan for holding Calvinist ideas. Merulo had used the confraternity, which had been a centre for humanist discussions since the late 15th century, to spread his developing Calvinist ideas. His associates there included Emilio Merula, editor of a 1504 edition of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, and Fausto Anderlini, who had links with Desiderius Erasmus.⁶ Reading of Erasmus, Luther, Melancthon, and the vernacular Bible caused trouble for the Maltese confraternity of Buoni Cristiani (Good Christians) in Mdina and Birgu (Vittoriosa). Revelations to the episcopal authorities led Pope Pius IV to introduce in 1561 an inquisition tribunal in Malta, responsible to the Congregation in Rome.⁷

5 Black, *Italian Confraternities*, 60–61; Black, "Confraternities and the Italian Inquisitions," 294–295; Valerio Marchetti, *Gruppi ereticali senesi del Cinquecento* (Florence: 1975), 51–67; Antonio Rotondò, "Per la storia dell'eresia a Bologna nel secolo Cinquecento," *Rinascimento* 13 (1962), 137–211; Gigliola Fragnito, *La Bibbia al rogo* (Bologna: 1997), 56.

6 Simonetta Adorni-Braccesi kindly supplemented knowledge of this context in an email after hearing my talk on "Confraternities and the Italian Inquisitions" at a Pisa conference; see the printed version cited in 295, note 1. I had used Salvatore Caponetto, *The Protestant Reformation in Sixteenth-century Italy* (Kirksville, MO: 2000), 126–128.

7 Frans Ciappara, *Society and the Inquisition in Early Modern Malta* (San Gwann, Malta: 2001), 325–326.

We have evidence on denunciations made somewhat later to the Venetian tribunal about confraternities (usually called *scuole* in Venice) and the beliefs and practices of some members. Given Venice's cosmopolitan complex, a key centre of international trade, and some industrial strength it comes as no surprise that denunciations were made against non-Venetians and people attached to guild confraternities, the *scuole delle arti*. In 1588 the long-standing *Scuola dei Calegheri e Zavattoni Todeschi*, a confraternity/guild for German shoemakers and cobblers, hitherto run in a good Catholic manner (*cattolicamente*), was investigated by the Inquisition for alleged Lutheran beliefs. This was not surprising since recent immigrants with these skills from Protestant German states were made to join this *scuola* if they wanted to work in Venice. The accusations came from two members who had been tried for heresy in a different context. They alleged that members avoided Mass and were eating meat on Fridays and Saturdays. The inquisitors also heard witnesses say that there had been verbal attacks against the pope, that some brothers worked on feast-days, and a cross had been removed from the *scuola*. The questioning concentrated on a German, Martin, who was the *gastaldo*, the leading administrative official in the *scuola*. Martin was judged to be a formal heretic; after confessing sacramentally, he was sentenced to abstain from meat also on Wednesdays for six months; to confess three times a year, and to recite the Rosary on Fridays and Saturdays. His conviction may have been as much for lies and evasions under oath, as for wrongful eating. Interestingly, support for him came from the parish priest of San Samuele, who noted Martin's membership of the church's Holy Sacrament confraternity, while another parish official, a member of that confraternity, attested that the devout Martin had helped decorate the confraternity and was generous with his Easter alms.⁸

On other occasions the Venetian tribunal heard accusations against dubious behaviour in *scuole* involving foreigners, but ended taking no formal action against individuals. In 1590 an accusation was levelled against the members of a confraternity of Florentines, the *Scuola di San Giovanni* based in the Frari church, saying that some members met at night, heard a sermon from a layman, flagellated themselves in the dark, and a member expounded on the meaning of the Gospels in the dark—"dichiara l'evangelo al scuro." The accuser was Bernardino de Ferris, a member of another confraternity under the guidance of a Jesuit, Don Raffael; but Bernardino's accusation was relayed to the inquisition by the Reverend Lorenzo Pacifico, whose status may have

8 Archivio di Stato, Venice [ASV] Santo Ufficio [S.O], Processi Busta 61, folder "Verseman Giovanni e compagni"; Giovanni, not in fact the main accused, confessed to having killed a pig in the hospital courtyard, for an inappropriate feast. See Black, *Italian Confraternities*, 61 and note 12.

encouraged the tribunal to pursue the allegation. Bernardino's own *scuola* was led by a priest and its clerical membership included not only Jesuits, but also Capuchins and Tolentines. Bernardino himself, however, was a layman. The surviving records suggest that the inquisitors let the matter drop, presumably judging such lay discussions to be acceptable. During questioning it was alleged that in a *scuola* based in the church of San Polo and led by a Florentine the brothers also met at night without a priest.⁹

The investigation of the *scuola* in San Polo merits further attention. In July 1590 a denunciation was made in the Patriarch's Curia, probably by a priest, against the San Polo *scuola*. The patriarch's vicar (*vicario*) heard the denunciation and conducted the questioning. The patriarch was an *ex officio* member of the Venetian inquisition tribunal, and his vicar could be his substitute. His hearing and questioning was a recognisable prelude to a formal inquisition investigation (*processo*). However it was apparently judged unnecessary to involve the full tribunal. This San Polo *scuola* (one of several based in that large parish church), was made up of different national groups (*nationi*)—Florentines, Bergamaschi, Venetians and others—possibly numbering 70, though a summary indicated 40, which were possibly the active membership. The testimony of witnesses makes it clear that the Florentines dominated and used rituals from Florentine traditions. This *scuola* was not based on a chapel in the church but used a rented room, and so could easily operate without supervision by the lead parish priest (*piovano*) and his other clergy. The *scuola* brothers were accused of holding several ceremonies at night, especially around the Office of the Madonna, sometimes with a priest, sometimes not. Lay members gave sermons and read from the vernacular Gospels, and discussed them. It was a kind of *laudese* confraternity in the Florentine tradition, with much psalm and hymn singing, and flagellation sessions. Most interestingly it was revealed that they conducted the feet washing ceremony on Maundy Thursday, presided over by one of the *scuola*'s lay governors. This was followed by eating and drinking in a commemorative supper, as if imitating the Last Supper. There was conflicting testimony on whether a priest was present to give a blessing. This confraternity's behaviour came to the authorities' attention because of verbal

9 ASV S.O. Processi Busta 66, folder "S. Giovanni (Confraternite)," investigations on 8 May, 14 June 1590. Black, *Italian Confraternities*, 62; Richard Mackenney, *Tradesmen and Traders. The World of the Guilds in Venice and Europe, c.1250–c.1650* (London: 1987); Black, "Confraternities Under Suspicion in the Early Modern Period," in *Early Modern Confraternities*, 174, 181 notes 11–12. Bernardino was called a *rassarius* working at the sign of the Lion. Presumably based on the Venetian word *rassa*, this could mean either a worker in a heavy cloth, or maker of a large iron instrument used in cutting pasta, according to Giuseppe Boerio, *Dizionario del dialetto veneto* (1856; repr. Florence: 1993), 554.

and physical conflicts between some brothers. A leading trouble-maker, and witness, was the wool-cloth merchant Jacobo Berlandi, a Venetian suspicious of the Florentines and of the confraternity's Holy Week celebrations. Berlandi had a Jesuit confessor and had preached following the Jesuit's advice. Because such Maundy Thursday celebrations, complete with musically accompanied outdoor processions, were part of the rituals of other Venetian *scuole*, such activities by the San Polo group would not, on their own, have upset the Patriarch and the Inquisition tribunal (if consulted). Access to and use of the vernacular Bible by laymen without priestly guidance might, however, have been more worrying. In the end, having received diverse and conflicting reports, the patriarch's vicar seems to have decided to proceed no further. Sources in these circumstances give no idea about what informal discussions might have taken place. The leading parish priest (*pievano*) may well have been warned by the patriarch to control this foreign dominated *scuola* better.¹⁰

In the case involving the German Martin, it was suggested in his defence that membership of a Holy Sacrament confraternity was witness to his strong Catholic beliefs and behaviour. Others argued that membership in certain dedicated parish confraternities, such as the Holy Sacrament, Rosary, or Christian Doctrine ones, attested to orthodoxy and good teaching. Such was the suggestion implied by Cardinal Ercole Gonzaga in 1549 who, in his defence for not being a member of such a confraternity, declared:

I am a Catholic and a good one and I have in my house someone who knows and wants to teach me what I ought to say and think as a good Catholic; if I am not a member of the Company of the Rosary or that of the *Suore* (Sisters) of Ravenna, have patience. It is enough that I am of the Company of Christ.

The good Catholicism of the cardinal, an episcopal reformer and humanist, had been placed in doubt by hard-liners and Inquisition promoters such as Cardinal Gian Pietro Carafa, later Pope Paul IV.¹¹

The issue of whether belonging to a Holy Sacrament confraternity demonstrated a heart-felt conversion from Judaism to Catholicism arose, and arises,

10 Archivio Patriarcale, Venice. Curia Patriarcale, Archivio "Segreto": Criminalia Presbyterorum 1589–1742, "Contra Societatem Florentinorum apud ecc. S. Pauli 13 Julij 1590." For a more detailed discussion, see Black "Confraternities under Suspicion," 174–179, and 181–184, notes 13–37.

11 Black, "Confraternities under Suspicion," 171–172, using Paul V. Murphy, "Between Spiritual and Intransigent: Cardinal Ercole Gonzaga and Patrician Reform in Sixteenth-Century Italy," *Catholic Historical Review* 88 (2002), 446–469, citing 446.

in the well documented and discussed case of Gaspar Ribeiro and his family, investigated in Venice in the 1560s to 1581, when Gaspar died. He was born in or near Lisbon circa 1493/94, travelled and traded in parts of Europe, as Jew or Christian, and ended in Venice where he was known as a *converso*.¹² His daughter Violante wanted to be Christian, while her brother João wanted to force her to marry a Jew; this led to the involvement of the Inquisition in 1569, leading to her being allowed to marry a Christian. Gaspar's second wife in 1574 was a good Christian. In 1580 the Inquisition investigated him at length, seeking information on past activities, his beliefs, and actions. Was he Christian or Jew? He died in 1581 while still being tried and his body was eventually buried among the Jews. The tribunal ruled that he was a Judaiser and apostate. The arguments for his eventually being a good Christian were that he had long been a member of the Holy Sacrament confraternity in the parish church of Santa Maria Formosa, and served as its *gastaldo* for a while. His commissioning of a rich tabernacle for the Host when organising the redecoration of the chapel was commemorated in an inscription saying he had had it done. He was alms-giver to friars who called on him and in various ways helped church celebrations. Brian Pullan, who first seriously discussed this case, argued that Gaspar was seeking a synthesis between Christianity and Judaism, not really understanding either. I argued that prominent involvement in the Holy Sacrament confraternity (as with the German *gastaldo* Martin), suggested a genuine final commitment, following his daughter and second wife. Anthony Molho, in contrast, has upheld the view of a complaining rabbi, seeing Gaspar as always having to be a dissimulator as a trader through the Mediterranean, sailing with two rudders, Jewish and Christian—as Brian Pullan had stressed for another *converso* or *marrano*, Abraham Righetto who also had been forced out of Iberia. Gaspar was contentious and involved in different disputes in Venice. It was the papal Nuncio (an *ex officio* member of the Venetian tribunal), not the appointed inquisitor, who pressed the tribunal to investigate Gaspar's religious affiliation and beliefs.¹³

12 *Converso* was a term used in Iberia and Italy for a Jew or Muslim who had become a baptised Christian, whether forcibly or voluntarily. The more pejorative term *marrano* was also used, especially in Spain, for converts from Islam and often implied an insincere conversion.

13 For the records of the investigations see *Processi del S. Uffizio contro ebrei e giudaizzanti*, (ed.) Pier Cesare Ioly Zorattini, 14 vols (Florence: 1980–1990), 5:33–434. For analyses see Brian Pullan, *The Jews of Europe and the Inquisition of Venice 1550–1670* (Oxford: 1983), 230–241; Pullan, “A Ship with Two Rudders: Righetto Marrano and the Inquisition in Venice,” *The Historical Review* 20 (1977), 25–88; Black, *Italian Confraternities*, 268–269; Black, “Confraternities under Suspicion,” 172; Black, “Early Modern Italian Confraternities:

4 Denunciations of Confraternities or Members in the Iberian Worlds

Iberia and the dependent Spanish and Portuguese colonial worlds developed problems that hardly existed for Italians. Besides some common problems of Jewish and Muslim converts and their reneging, Spain and Portugal had racial relation concerns as they controlled Africans, Indians in the east, and native Americans. Church leaders and the laity were divided over whether such people should be converted to Christianity and whether they should be freed if enslaved. Once converted should they be in confraternities and, if so, whether these should be just for blacks and native Americans or whether some confraternities should integrate them with whites.

It is not surprising that the Inquisitions became involved. We have the interesting case of the confraternity of the Rosary in Lisbon, founded in the late 15th century, that included both European whites and West African blacks from coastal areas. Manumission and social integration had been encouraged by some Dominicans from the late 15th century on and further fostered by the Jesuits from the 1580s and 1590s.¹⁴ The confraternity had tense divisions between white proprietors (*pesoas honradas*, "persons of honour"), living in and around Lisbon, and the black Africans (*pretos forros e escravos*, "free or slaves") who have been freed.¹⁵ From the 1550s the Portuguese Inquisition took an interest, partly because of fears of Islamisation. Debates were started by Dominicans about whether whites and blacks should be separated. Then the freed Africans were accused of disobeying the Inquisition friars who issued certain orders. A notable early trial was that of Fernando Oliveira in 1547–48, an ex-Dominican, who claimed that in the lands of the unfaithful those who observed the laws of nature saved themselves ("nas terras dos infieys se salvão os que bem vivem na ley da natureza," as he said to the inquisitor in December 1547).¹⁶ More than that, in writings he challenged the legal foundations of the Portuguese empire, and proprietors' views on slaves in Lisbon. This concerned the privilege of the Rosario confraternity on manumission. In a second trial, for which details are missing, he managed to avoid a death sentence. In the longer term, moderate views on the free will of black Africans in the confraternity

Inclusion and Exclusion," *Historein. A Review of the Past and Other Stories* 2 (2002), 65–87, esp. 73. Public discussions with Anthony Molho in Glasgow and on Syros in 1998.

14 Giuseppe Marcocci, "Conversione e schiavitù. La confraternita della Nossa Senhora do Rosário nella Lisbona del Cinquecento," in *Brotherhood and Boundaries*, 369–385.

15 Marcocci, "Conversione e schiavitù," 379 n. 30.

16 Marcocci, "Conversione e schiavitù," 382 n. 41.

were allowed to prevail, but separation of blacks from whites in the confraternity did occur later.

A prominent confraternity in Madrid was the *Hermanidad de San Antonio*, which gathered the Portuguese in town. The brotherhood was filled with New Christians prominent in business and finance. It ran a hospital (with considerable complications), gave charity to poor Portuguese, provided some dowries annually, and looked after imprisoned Portuguese. After the 1640 Portuguese revolt the confraternity was accused of having turned itself into a refuge for Portuguese New Christians and having become a true *Sinagoga*, under the leadership of its leading priest and rector of the hospital, Fray Miguel Pacheco. He had allegedly hidden his Jewish ancestry from the Inquisition and converted the institution to a synagogue. It was not, however, the Inquisition that responded to the charges, but a Junta de Intelligencias de Portugal established by King Philip III of Portugal (Philip IV of Spain) in order to check on the purity of the blood of those in key positions. Pacheco was eventually exonerated. The Inquisition did investigate individual confraternity brothers, notably Fernando Montesinos, a leading businessman who had earlier been tried by the Cuenca tribunal.¹⁷

5 The Inquisition and Papal Attacks on Molinism, Quietism, and Silent Prayer, as Evidenced in 17th-Century Confraternities

In the 17th century the Papacy and the Inquisitions became increasingly concerned with some seemingly heretical developments of mystical ideas and the practice of “silent prayer.” In Italy a new spirituality was most manifest in what became known as the Pelagian movement, which involved confraternities. In Spain and then Italy mystical ideas were developed from older *alumbrado* (“enlightened”) contemplative attitudes, producing movements called Quietism (with Pier Matteo Petrucci, 1636–1701, the leading figure), or Molinism, named after its chief exponent, Miguel de Molinos (1628–1696).¹⁸

17 Juan Ignacio Pulido Serrano, “La Hermandad y Hospital de San Antonio de Los Portugueses de Madrid,” *Anales de Instituto de Estudios Madrileños* 44 (2004), 320–325.

18 Black, *The Italian Inquisition*, 153–156. For wider coverage and sources see the articles in the *Dizionario Storico dell’Inquisizione* [DSI], (ed.) Adriano Prosperi, with the collaboration of Vincenzo Lavenia and John Tedeschi, 5 vols (Pisa: 2010): “Miguel de Molinos,” by Adelsa Malena, 2:1059–1060, her “Quietismo,” 3:1288–94, and “Petrucci, Pier Matteo,” 3:1206–07; and “Pelagini,” by Lisa Roscioni, 3:1179. None discusses the impact on confraternities, other than those of the Milanese Pelagini groups mentioned by Roscioni. Malena has a fuller treatment in her *L’eresia dei perfetti: Inquisizione romana ed esperienze mistiche nel*

These manifestations of a new mysticism were in pursuit of personal spiritual perfection, producing visionary experiences in some cases, especially among women. The ecstasies could lead—allegedly or in reality—to sexual experiences involving male clerical confessors and devotees. Their admirers claimed the women to be “living saints.” A key element in the movements was the advocacy of “silent prayer,” unguided by the clergy and the wider community. The Church was particularly worried when women were pursuing their spirituality without male guidance or supervision. Despite the individualist element of the movements, some confraternities in Italy were affected by it. The impact on Iberian confraternities remains unclear.

In Italy this spirituality was most obvious among groups known as the *Pelagini*. These were followers of Giacomo Filippo Casolo, who first led a group in the Milanese church of Santa Pelagia. His influence spread and led to the creation of several confraternities and informal groups, notably the Santissima Trinità in Santa Pelagia. Initially the group had official support, even receiving indulgences from Pope Urban VIII in April 1644. Silent prayer was a key feature of the group and the importance of the Eucharist was downplayed. In time, some dubious group activities became known, such as women joining men in preaching and discussing the Gospels. Noble Milanese women had joined and were contributing much to charity and to the “rescue” of prostitutes. Casolo and his followers spread the group’s spirituality; soon formal confraternities or informal groups were established in Brescia, Bergamo and in the Val Camonica, aided by the Congregation of the Fathers of Peace in Brescia.

The Inquisition entered the picture in Brescia. In 1653 a priest in the town of Breno, in the Val Camonica, complained to the bishop of Brescia, Marco Morosini, that *Pelagini* were subverting the town’s *scuola* of *disciplinati*. More complaints followed leading the Papal Nuncio in Venice to report the matter to the Congregation of the Holy Office in Rome. The inquisitorial trials that followed were supported by the local civil authorities, who joined with Inquisition officials in destroying *Pelagini* oratories in the valleys and breaking up groups in Val Camonica. Leading clerics and laymen were tried and convicted 29 March 1657. Casolo, who had already been tried by inquisitors in Bergamo and Brescia, died in June 1656. The others were banished for life to other Venetian cities. Elsewhere the oratories were dissolved, as they were in Milan in

Seicento italiano (Rome: 2003). Andrea Del Col, *L’Inquisizione in Italia. Dal XII al XXI secolo* (Milan: 2006), 666–669. On the support received from some confraternities and inquisitorial interest, see Gianvittorio Signorotto, *Inquisitori e mistici nel Seicento italiano* (Bologna: 1989). See Agostino Borromeo’s review of this work in *Catholic Historical Review* 77 (1991), 309–312; and Christopher F. Black’s review in *Journal of Modern History* 63 (1991), 588–590.

1657. The *Pelagini* continued to spread the practice of silent prayer, but it seems that their confraternity-like groups were no longer active. Bishops rather than inquisitors continued to curb the activities of such religious “deviants” across northern Italy while the central Inquisition in Rome pursued their writings.¹⁹

A leading later Pelagian tried by the Inquisition in Milan, along with his “apostles” was Giuseppe Francesco Borri (1627–95), a Milanese nobleman, physician, and alchemist. He managed to escape, was condemned to death as contumacious in 1661, and was burned in effigy in the Campo dei Fiori in Rome.²⁰

The activities of the *Pelagini* impacted on the papal and inquisitorial pursuit of Molinism or Quietism; the two terms could be loosely used interchangeably. Miguel de Molinos and his works were formally condemned in 1687, after his major book *Guía espiritual que desembaraza el alma* (1675), had gone through twenty editions, with translations into Italian, Latin, French, Dutch, German, and English. While Molinist or Quietist approaches fostered individual spirituality, the enthusiasm also generated a range of confraternal groups in Italy. A notable promoter of confraternities with a Molinist approach was Tommaso Bandinelli, a Siennese nobleman, who after an immoral youth, led a devout and charitable life. As rector of the Siennese hospital of Santa Maria della Scala, his influence led to the creation of two confraternities, *San Girolamo* and the *Madonna*, that promoted Quietist ideas and practices. He was first investigated by the inquisitor in Perugia and then, on orders from the Roman Congregation, by the inquisitor in Siena, Serafino Gottarelli, a notable pursuer of Molinists. Bandinelli, pleading that he did not fully understand some of his propositions, abjured and was banned from contacting female religious houses and conservatories, where he had some Quietist impact. Confraternity members and female religious were apparently not investigated.²¹

Spain also saw some intense opposition to Molinists and Quietists. Their movements were seen as an extension of the mystical *alumbrado* teaching and behaviour of the 16th century, with influences from Jewish and Muslim mysticism. In the 1680s Archbishop Jaime Palafox played a major role in opposing

19 Signorotto, *Inquisitori e mistici*, esp. Chapter 7, “Il processo bresciano e la condanna dei pelagrini,” and Chapter 14, “La politica dell’Inquisizione nel secolo XVII”; Black, “Confraternities and the Italian Inquisitions,” 297–298.

20 Signorotto, *Inquisitori e mistici*, 253–258; Black, *Italian Inquisition*, 155; Lisa Roscioni, “Francesco Giuseppe Borri,” *DSI* 1:216–17. Borri died in Castel Sant’Angelo in 1695, where he had been imprisoned since 1672, after having been arrested in Moravia in 1670 and transferred first to Vienna and then to Rome. Protectors in the Roman Curia influenced his retrial, changing the verdict to life imprisonment.

21 Black, “Confraternities and the Italian Inquisition,” 299; Malena, *Leresia dei perfetti*, 185–186.

Molinists, alongside the Seville inquisition. Their impact on Spanish confraternities is still unclear.²²

6 The Inquisition's Familiars

All inquisitions built up networks of supporters from lay society to support their work. These came to be known as “familiars”; *famigli*, *famigliari*, *famili-ares*. They were expected to feed the inquisitors with information, reveal suspects, defend inquisitors from insults or physical attacks, look after prisoners, guard gates and borders (at least in Spain), participate in *autos de fé*, accompany inquisitors in public processions, and publicise Edicts of Faith. How many of these activities the familiars might fulfil varied from tribunal to tribunal.²³ In return many familiars came to be granted “privileges”: tax exemptions, the right to carry weapons (and perhaps also have servants so allowed), to be exempt from prosecution in lay or clerical courts other than those of the Inquisition. Sometimes such familiars were formed into confraternities both for their own spiritual life and to provide stronger group support for the local inquisitor. As already indicated, they might be named after St Peter Martyr or called *Crocesignati*.

These privileges could encourage laymen to become familiars. In Castile there was already a tendency for nobles to become familiars, since acceptance increased public prestige. In Aragon the position appealed to social climbers. In Catalonia, however, there was little honour or prestige in being a familiar, so inquisitors used lower class familiars, which gave them a lot of trouble. Though Portuguese and Spanish rulers imposed limitations, by the late 16th century

22 Michel Boeglin, *Inquisición y Contrarreforma. El Tribunal del Santo Oficio de Sevilla (1560–1700)* (Seville: 2006), esp. 135–141. Boeglin does not indicate any group support from confraternities.

23 Francisco Bethencourt, *The Inquisition. A Global History, 1478–1834*, trans. by Jean Berrell (Cambridge: 2009), 74–82, 86–89, 162–168 for all areas, estimating numbers, commenting on eligibility, but not on the role of confraternities. For Spain the fullest study is Gonzalo Cerrillo Cruz, *Los Familiares de la Inquisición Española* (Valladolid: 2000); he covers this full range of activity (214–225) and the range of privileges—jurisdictional, economic, spiritual, social, military (117–211). Jaime Contreras, *El Santo Oficio de la Inquisición de Galicia. Poder, sociedad y cultura* (Madrid: 1982), Chapter 2, “Familiares y comisarios: evolución y sociología,” 67–177, indicates large numbers of familiars in this region. They had a corporate identity through a network (*red*), defending their jurisdictional privileges, and initially protecting themselves against local seigniorial powers—until the arrival of a period of *señorialización* starting in the late 16th century (107). There was much alleged corruption, (see also 49–55). He does not discuss confraternities.

the number of familiars was considerable both in Italy and in Iberia. By the mid-17th century both the Papacy and secular rulers were concerned with the fiscal and economic repercussions they suffered from the excessive number of familiars. The Concordia of Castile in 1553 was an early attempt at limiting numbers; a 1580 Concordia sought limitations in Sicily.²⁴ As Henry Kamen points out, in Spain many familiars were organised in the confraternity of Saint Peter Martyr, but he does not elaborate on their structures or corporate roles.²⁵ Measures were taken again from the mid-17th century to reduce the numbers, as was done by popes Alexander VII (r. 1655–67), Innocent XI (r. 1676–89), and Innocent XII (r. 1691–1700), and by King Peter II of Portugal (r. 1683–1706), who saw familiars as “odiosos à Republico” (hateful to the State).²⁶

It is hard to assess the extent to which familiars actively denounced suspects to the local inquisitors, and it is not much studied. Henry Kamen says that few denunciations were made by familiars, most were from neighbours. Secrecy over denunciations inhibits our analysis. My impression for Italy is that the role of the familiars was limited. Joaquim Veríssimo Serrão makes a general claim for significant activity by *familiars* in Portugal in increasing social control, but by being most active in taking accused to court and prison, and later to the *autos de fé*. James Wadsworth, like Kamen for Spain, attacks the old idea that familiars were spies, and suggests that most did little to help inquisitors’ detection work.²⁷ For Spain, Riccardo Juan Cavallero sees the *familiars* as constituting a kind of *policia secreta* that was exaggeratedly expanded because of enjoyed privileges, such as only being solely under the inquisition’s jurisdiction and being allowed to carry arms day and night. They participated directly in arrests. Ana Cristina Cuadro García stresses their role in defending

24 On Concordia, see Cerrillo Cruz, *Los Familiares*, 55–56 and 34–71 on numbers in different regions of Spain.

25 Henry Kamen, *The Spanish Inquisition. An Historical Revision* (London: 1997), 80, 145–148; Kamen, *The Phoenix and the Flame. Catalonia and the Counter Reformation* (New Haven: 1993), 214–215, 265–270. See also Black, *Italian Inquisition*, especially 49–50, 56–57, 99–101; Black, “Confraternities and the Italian Inquisitions,” 299–304; Black, “Confraternite. Italia,” in *DSI* 1:377–81; Christopher Black, “Relations between Inquisitors in Modena and the Roman Congregation in the Seventeenth Century” in *The Roman Inquisition: Centre versus Peripheries*, eds. Katherine Aron-Beller and Christopher Black (Leiden: 2018), 91–117; Elena Brambilla, “Familiari, Italia,” *DSI* 2:575–76; Frans Ciappara, *Society and the Inquisition*, 548; Ciappara, *Roman Inquisition*, 103–130; Ana Cristina Cuadro García, “Familiari, Spagna,” *DSI* 2:577–78; Irene Fosi, “The Inquisition in Rome and the Papal Territories” in *The Roman Inquisition: Centre versus Peripheries*, eds. Katherine Aron-Beller and Christopher Black (Leiden: 2018), 33–59; Joaquim Veríssimo Serrão, *História de Portugal*, 3:260–68, 5:366–70; James E. Wadsworth, “Familiari, Portogallo,” *DSI* 2:576–77.

26 Serrão, *História de Portugal*, 3:265 and 5:367.

27 Kamen, *The Spanish Inquisition*, 145–146; Serrão, *História de Portugal*, 5:367; Wadsworth, “Familiari, Portogallo,” 577.

inquisitors. In Galicia the network of *familiares* was notable in confiscating possessions and organising subsequent auctions—alongside some scandalous behaviour. Another key role was inspecting foreign ships.²⁸ In Mexico or New Spain, “*Familiares*, or Inquisition police, were appointed in each province to enforce the tribunal’s decrees and to make arrests of those guilty of unorthodox conduct.”²⁹ They were entitled to invoke vice-regal support in resolving conflicts. They could be public vocal supporters of inquisition activity; for example, in the 1570s when some captured English sailors were led to an *auto de fé*, they shouted to the executioner flogging them, “Harder, harder on these English Lutherans.”³⁰

In Brazil all familiars were expected to be paid-up members of the confraternities of St Peter Martyr after their establishment at the end of the 17th century. Brazil had a high number of familiars because, in the absence of full inquisitors the inquisitorial control came from Lisbon’s tribunal, which used clerical *comissários*, and more familiars, to take prisoners, organise witnesses, escort some to ships for trial in Lisbon. Only some, officially registered as *familiares do numero*, were fully privileged. In their celebrations, especially on St Peter Martyr’s day, they were expected to honour the saint as holy martyr and doctor, encourage current inquisitorial officials to imitate the saint, and honour the Inquisition with decorations, music, and a commemorative sermon. Funerals of members were structured to enhance public inquisitorial prestige. The brotherhoods acted as mutual aid societies. Membership in the confraternity added to the privileges already bestowed on familiars. In Brazil, familiars were militarised in a *Companhia dos Familiares* in the 18th century and had distinctive uniforms. The confraternity was locally controlled, not subject to Lisbon’s authority, nor to the Brazilian regular army. Membership in it carried notable privileges.³¹

28 Riccardo Juan Cavallero, *Justicia inquisitorial. El system de justicia criminal de la Inquisición española* (Buenos Aires: 2003), 58, 207; Contreras, *El Santo Oficio ... Galicia*, 146–148, 151–156; Cuadro García, “Familiari, Spagna.” On *familiares* and clerical *comisarios* see Jaime Contreras, *Historia de la Inquisición Español (1478–1834). Herejías, delitos y representación* (Madrid: 1997), 70–78.

29 Richard E. Greenleaf, *The Mexican Inquisition of the Sixteenth Century* (Albuquerque: 1969), 160.

30 Greenleaf, *The Mexican Inquisition*, 160, 163, reporting a participant who wrote a memoir; see also 180–182. See John N. Chuchiak, *The Inquisition in New Spain, 1536–1820. A Documentary History* (Baltimore: 2012), especially 21–22, 90 (from 1570 Inquisitor General’s Instructions from Madrid), emphasising that the familiars in New Spain had the same privileges as in Castile, 97–98 (sample Title of Holy Office Familiar, 1667).

31 James E. Wadsworth, *Agents of Orthodoxy. Honor, Status, and the Inquisition in Colonial Pernambuco, Brazil* (Lanham, MA: 2007), especially Chapter 9, “Corporate Institutions: Brotherhoods and Militias,” and 232–233; also his “Celebrating St Peter Martyr,” 177–178, 181 on the privileged and duties.

7 Confraternities Supporting the Inquisitors. The Italian *Crocesignati*

Some inquisitors in Italy received strong public support from *Crocesignati* confraternities of familiars, but some such confraternities could resent and resist the inquisitor's supervision or control.³² We know about some valued 16th-century creations as in Parma and Reggio in 1508, then in Como, Cremona, Faenza, Florence, Imola, Modena, Pavia and Rimini. The one in Milan was named after St Peter Martyr. The Turin confraternity of San Paolo was known to be active in pursuing heretics, but we know little on how far other confraternities of familiars went in this. The Mantuan *Crocesignati*, founded by the local inquisitor, printed its statutes in 1595 and, as with many other confraternities' statutes, paid more attention to office-holding and holders than to practical activity or spirituality. The statutes stressed the importance of processions with ceremonial crosses to escort the inquisitor and his immediate officials and boost the image of the Inquisition. Such was probably the main duty of most *Crocesignati* or similar confraternities. Such activity, added to the "privileges" and exemptions, attracted a membership from leading families, as was the case in Bologna (with the Lambertini and Pepoli families rivalling each other in the effort). Sometimes, though probably rarely, women were members (*sorelle*), but not as office-holders.³³

Relations between inquisitors and supposedly supporting confraternities were not always harmonious. This is not unexpected, especially where the latter were dominated by noble or professional lay families. We have much information about a long-running dispute (starting in 1659) between the inquisitors and a branch of the Mantuan *Crocesignati* confraternity in the parish church in rural Goito. The membership resented supervision and subsequent investigations of alleged misconduct by the inquisitorial vicar and the bishop. Documents from this dispute reveal that such resistance by the *Crocesignati* to intervention and jurisdictional claims by inquisitors and bishops were common in the 17th century, as we see in Cremona, Ravenna, or Soncino. At times, this was coupled with broader disputes between the inquisitor and the local bishop.³⁴ In Sicily, where the Spanish Inquisition prevailed, *Crocesignati* and

32 Black, "Confraternities and the Italian Inquisitions," especially 300–305, and Black, "Confraternite: Italia."

33 Biblioteca Comunale dell'Archiginnasio, Bologna, B1909, Lettere di diversi al padre Inquisitore del S. Ufficio di Bologna, 1653–1679; Adriano Prosperi, *Tribunali della coscienza. Inquisitori, confessori, missionari* (Turin: 1996), 181–182.

34 Archivio della Congregazione per la Dottrina della Fede (ACDF), Stanza Storica, LL 4–f, folder (2), *Differentium vertentem inter RRV Episcoporum Mantue, et Crocesignatos, 1637–1659*, (though in fact up to 1678); Black, "Confraternities and the Italian Inquisitions,"

similar confraternities for inquisition officials and familiars were also founded. An early one, the *Compagnia dei Bianchi* (founded in 1541) provided comforters for the condemned for three days before their execution. These groups were dominated by high society, so much so that in Francesco Renda's view they were like a Masonic lodge for the baronage.³⁵

8 Confraternities Supporting the Inquisitors in Portugal, Spain and their Colonies

In Portugal and its colonies the most important confraternities linked to the Inquisition were those named after Saint Peter Martyr. In his Bull *Cum inter caeteras* of 29 June 1611 Pope Paul V ruled that members of such a confraternity should be considered officials of the Inquisition. Honest Christians should be encouraged to join them. Such reconstituted confraternities appeared in Lisbon and Goa in 1615, Coimbra and Porto in 1620, with ones in Évora, Funchal (Madeira), and Brazil (Bahia, Recife and Rio de Janeiro), to follow. The Brazilian ones seem to have focused on adding to the honour and prestige of the Inquisition and the inquisitors. According to the 1632 *Compromisso* statutes, the brotherhood was "properly a congregation or union of the ministers of the Holy Office to celebrate the glorious St. Peter Martyr, patron and protector of the Inquisitions."³⁶ Common statutes for Portuguese Peter Martyr confraternities appeared in 1632. They were to be run by a judge (usually the Inquisitor general), a scribe (*scrivano*), two administrators, and a procurator for familiars. The confraternity constituted a society for mutual support, spiritually in life and in death (with feast days, masses, funerals), and for caring in times of temporal needs. Wives and widows of members were also to receive honourable burials. James Wadsworth notes that they did not accumulate the wealth

302–303. A visit to ACDF in May 2018 incidentally revealed (in St. St. LL 1 b, *Raccolta di documenti riguardanti la confraternita dei Crocesignati (dipendenti direttamente dal S.O.) in varie città d'Italia*), that disputes over jurisdiction and control between inquisitors, bishops, and Crocesignati could last many years; e.g. the one in Reggio Emilia ran from c.1600 to 1616 (fols. 412r–636v), and over the one in Scandiano di Reggio 1636–1646 (639r–709v). In Reggio it appears to have started over who controlled the keys to the chapel. The *confratelli* appealed to the Congregation in Rome for support. Cardinal secretary Giovanni Maria Mellini in letter from Rome dated 31 October 1609 ruled against the bishop after he had tried to visit the confraternity's Oratory in June 1608 (St. St. GG 4 d 1, unpaginated).

35 Francesco Renda, *L'Inquisizione in Sicilia. I fatti. Le persone* (Palermo: 1997), 129–130, 159, 165–170; see also Maria Sofia Messina, *Inquisitori, negromanti e streghe nella Sicilia moderna (1500–1782)*, (Palermo: 2007), 43–47.

36 Wadsworth, "Celebrating St. Peter Martyr," 186, 225 (Chapter 21).

of similar Mexican confraternities. Portuguese inquisition officials might also be involved in other confraternities, such as those dedicated to Pedro Arbués, an Aragonese inquisitor assassinated by *converso* families in 1485 and beatified in 1664 after a strong campaign by the *Suprema*, the Supreme Council of the Spanish Inquisition.³⁷ Lisbon officials joined the *Irmandad de São Jorge*, founded in 1558; most of its members were artisans working with metals and fire, such as smiths, and barber-surgeons who served the inquisition. In 1726 the familiars in Lisbon received permission to start a new confraternity dedicated to Saint John of Capestrano, a 15th-century inquisitor in Italy.³⁸ More broadly, the number of familiars in Portugal grew for some time and, until the 18th century, were better controlled than in Spain or Italy, though official limits were not imposed. From a 1640 Regulation in particular, familiars (and their wives and children) had to be free from Jewish and Moorish backgrounds. Spain had long tried to ensure familiars were checked for such purity of blood (*limpieza de sangre*).³⁹

Spain and its colonies also had confraternities named after Saint Peter Martyr. In 1570 Pope Pius V confirmed old privileges for familiars in such confraternities and granted them plenary indulgences and remission of sins.⁴⁰ The one in Madrid was well known in the 17th century for being the organiser of spectacular *autos de fé*, theatrical presentations of repentance that gave wide publicity to the Inquisition.⁴¹ An *auto de fé* in 1632 was notable for its visual display and music. The Council of the *Suprema* relied on this confraternity for such conclusions to sentencing policies and punishment.

The Madrid confraternity of St Peter Martyr (founded in 1604, with its constitutions approved in 1625) was dominated by noble families who held positions as commissioners, *consultores*, notaries, and *familiares*. According to Pulido Serrano this was an organisation primarily for privileged familiars. There was considerable overlap with the key administrative and professional personnel in the royal government.⁴² While the principal founding purpose

37 Doris Moreno Martínez, "Inquisitions," Chapter 13 in *Judging Faith, Punishing Sin. Inquisitions and Consistories in the Early Modern World*, (eds.) Charles H. Parker and Gretchen Starr-LeBeau (Cambridge: 2017), 167–179; see 174–175 for *Crocesignati*, St Peter Martyr confraternities, and the Arbués campaign.

38 James E. Wadsworth, "Confraternite, Portogallo," *DSI* 1:381–382.

39 Wadsworth, "Familiari, Portogallo"; Cerrillo Cruz, *Los familiares*, 90–94.

40 Cerrillo Cruz, *Los Familiares*, 175–177.

41 Juan Ignacio Pulido Serrano, *Injurias a Cristo. Religión, política y antijudaísmo en el siglo XVII* (Alcalá: 2002).

42 Pulido Serrano, *Injurias*, 192; a verdict based on the thesis of Elena Sánchez de Madariaga, "Cófradas y sociabilidad en el Madrid del Antiguo Régimen" (Madrid, 1996), a version of which she tells me may soon be published.

was mutual assistance, brotherly harmony did not necessarily prevail. In the 1620s to 1640s its brothers were involved in court politics and faction *embroglios*. There were further complications when some of the Genoese bankers and merchants living in Madrid joined the confraternity and became familiars. Given the increase in Portuguese New Christians living in Spain, some as competitors of the Genoese, this might have affected inquisitorial pressure on New Christians. But one suspects that the Madrid confraternity of St Peter Martyr and its members were probably not that helpful to the inquisitors beyond providing spectacular publicity and organizing *autos de fé*.⁴³

A confraternity of St Peter Martyr in colonial Mexico was well studied a while ago by Richard Greenleaf.⁴⁴ Formally founded as late as 1656, it embraced the inquisition familiars, who for Greenleaf constituted a police force. After King Philip II founded the Inquisition tribunal in Mexico in 1571, he wanted inquisitors, familiars, and staff to belong to a St Peter Martyr confraternity. Informal developments followed, and by 1604 the Madrid Suprema ordered that such confraternities be established in Dominican convents. Papal privileges and indulgences were loaded on them. Over time leading clergy and laymen were added as members. Troubles developed between the greater *familiatura* of familiars and the *cofradía*, much connected with social aggrandisement that was linked to the growing wealth of the Mexican tribunal, which by the 1640s had grown from early poverty to richness. The confraternity was designed to enhance the prestige of the Inquisition, which it did through the pomp of feast days and the use of firework displays—allegedly encouraging “scandalous behaviour” among the general public.⁴⁵ But it also helped brothers and their families by assisting the sick, granting dowries and arranging honourable funerals. Help with arrests of alleged heretics was encouraged by offering remissions of sins through indulgences; as was also offered when they instructed and helped convert those who had been arrested.⁴⁶ It seems that, starting in the 1760s, the confraternity paid to support prisoners, especially those under life sentences.⁴⁷ In contrast to the Italian situation, where prisoners might be freed to house arrest or exiled because the Inquisition could not afford to keep them in prison, the support offered by the Mexican confraternities might well have prolonged imprisonment. Over time, the *familiares* were outnumbered in

43 Pulido Serrano, *Injurias*, 193–200.

44 Richard Greenleaf, “The Inquisition Brotherhood: Cofradia de San Pedro Mártir of Colonial Mexico,” *The Americas* 40 (1983), 171–207.

45 Greenleaf, “The Inquisition Brotherhood,” 187.

46 See also Richard E. Greenleaf, “North American Protestants and the Mexican Inquisition, 1765–1820,” *A Journal of Church and State* 8 (1966), 181–196.

47 Greenleaf, “The Inquisition Brotherhood,” 185.

the confraternity by clergy and laymen of high social status seeking privileges, which seems to have led to apathy over Holy Office matters. Greenleaf's study is very full on financial matters, membership, misconduct of brothers, but this can tell us little about the tribunal's pursuit of heretics and the practical assistance it received from familiars. He concludes that, despite tensions and scandals, the confraternity of elites "did seem to sharpen the esprit de corps of the Holy Office and to give it unity and cohesion."⁴⁸

9 Conclusion

Drawing on the available information, one can suggest that the Italian or Roman Inquisition was more involved than the other inquisitions in investigating confraternities, though with limited condemnations. In Iberia, where one might expect inquisitors to be suspicious of members' beliefs and behaviour, they also took little action. For all inquisitions there were confraternities established to embrace inquisition officials and familiars and to support the work of inquisitors, but their spread was patchy. We have considerable difficulty establishing their numbers, what they really did in different cities or towns, and how far they helped in the pursuit of heretics and the immoral. Most Inquisition familiars probably remained outside confraternities. Many authorities soon deemed their numbers excessive. Their pursuit of privileges and misuse of them, their corrupt practices and immoral behaviour, could damage the reputation of the Inquisition among secular officials and the wider public. Some *Crocesignati* confraternities in Italy came to challenge the authority of local inquisitors, becoming in fact impediments rather than supporters of the Inquisition.

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PART 3

Good Works



Guides for a Good Life: The Sermons of Albertano da Brescia and other Instructions for Citizens and Believers in Italian Medieval Confraternities

Marina Gazzini

1 Introduction

Men and women in the Middle Ages were constantly trying to improve themselves and their life. Their final object was to become good Christians, a goal that often meant acquiring the necessary competencies to be a valued member of civil society and to work for the common good. In Italy, the interest in this dual goal developed especially in the era of the Communes (c.1100–1300), and especially in the 13th century when Italian society saw the bloodiest and most destabilizing conflicts between opposing factions. In examining these conflicts, historians have at times emphasised class divisions—nobility versus populace, knights versus infantry—and at time ideological differences—pro-imperial against pro-papal, Ghibellines against Guelphs—recognizing, however, that beneath such ideologies there were local power struggles that had only a very superficial connection with supra-local alliances.¹ This climate of conflict, which few would claim was practical, inspired many who sought to live together peacefully, without the physical violence and immoderate habits of the times, to plea for civil cohabitation. Peace and devotional movements, such as the *Magna devotio* of 1233, also known as the Hallelujah (*Alleluja*) movement, are a testimony to this.²

1 Rosa Maria Dessì, “I nomi dei guelfi e dei ghibellini da Carlo I d’Angiò a Petrarca,” in *Guelfi e ghibellini nell’Italia del Rinascimento*, (ed.) Marco Gentile (Rome: 2005), 3–78.

2 In fact, only the central phase of the 1233 movement, headed by the lay preacher Benedetto, also known as Frate Trombetta, should strictly be defined as Hallelujah; it was preceded and followed by other devotional, penitential, and peace movements sponsored, to a great extent, by mendicant friars. The bibliography on the Hallelujah movement is quite rich, but see in particular: André Vauchez, “Une campagne de pacification en Lombardie autour de 1233. L’action politique des Ordres Mendicants d’après la réforme des statuts communaux et les accords de paix,” *École Française de Rome: Mélanges d’archéologie et d’histoire* 78 (1966), 519–549; Vito Fumagalli, “In margine all’Alleluia del 1233,” *Bullettino dell’Istituto storico italiano per il medioevo* 80 (1968), 257–272; Daniel A. Brown, “The Alleluia. A Thirteenth Century Peace Movement,” *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum*, 81 (1988), 3–16; Augustine Thompson,

In a less extemporaneous manner, but in a more constant daily effort to affect the mind and behaviour of people, medieval confraternities also made a fundamental contribution to the formation of the good Christian citizen and the establishment of civic peace. In collaboration with both ecclesiastical and civic institutions, during the era of the Communes Italian confraternities intensified their devotional and charitable activities with appeals to respect the peace, with personal and group charitable activities, and with an effort to guarantee social coexistence, even among different religions. The flagellants (*disciplinati*) of Piacenza and Parma, for example, prayed not only for every "Christian soul," but also for every creature, "Jewish, Pagan, or Saracen" gifted with reason.³ These precepts for a good life were entrusted to the organisation's statutes⁴ and to the words of preachers, both lay and ecclesiastical.⁵

An analysis of the sermons that one famous man of culture and administration, the judge Albertano da Brescia, addressed to his brothers (*confratelli*) in the confraternity, or religious guild, for judges and notaries constitutes an important example of this educational process aimed at domestic pedagogy,

Revival Preachers and Politics in Thirteenth-Century Italy: The Great Devotion of 1233 (Oxford: 1992); Marina Gazzini, "Tra Chiesa e Impero, tra movimenti di pace ed eresia. Il francescano Gerardo Boccabadati da Modena, la Grande Devozione e gli statuti del Comune di Parma (1232–1233)," in *Francescani e politica nelle autonomie cittadine dell'Italia basso-medioevale. Atti del Convegno, Ascoli Piceno 27–29 novembre 2014*, (eds.) Isa Lori Sanfilippo and Roberto Lambertini (Roma: 2017), 59–89.

- 3 Candido Mesini, "Statuti piacentini-parmensi dei Disciplinati," *Archivio storico per le province parmensi*, ser. IV, 12 (1960), 43–70: 66–68; the statutes are not dated with precision, but are contained in a codex from the first half of the 14th century. For an analysis and discussion of the text, see Marina Gazzini, "Costruire la comunità: l'apporto delle confraternite fra Due e Trecento. Alcuni esempi dal Nord e Centro Italia," *Rivista di storia della Chiesa in Italia* 68.2 (2014), 331–348.
- 4 Statutes in fact represent one of the major sources for the history of medieval confraternities, even if they should, naturally, be studied with a very critical eye. The methodological observations of Giuseppe Alberigo continue to remain very valid; see his "Contributo alla storia delle confraternite dei disciplinati e della spiritualità laicale nei secoli XV e XVI," in *Il movimento dei disciplinati nel settimo centenario dal suo inizio* (Perugia 1260). *Atti del Convegno, Perugia 25–28 settembre 1260* (Perugia: 1262), 163–167. See also Giuseppina De Sandre Gasparini, "Per lo studio delle confraternite basso-medievali del territorio veneto: note su statuti editi e inediti," *Ricerche di storia sociale e religiosa*, (1980), 29–50; Luciano Orioli, "Per una rassegna bibliografica sulle confraternite medievali," *Ricerche di storia sociale e religiosa* (1980), 75–105.
- 5 Johannes Baptist Schneyer, "Die Laienpredigt im Mittelalter: ein Überblick," *Münchener Theologische Zeitschrift*, 18 (1967), 205–218; Gilles Gerard Meersseman, "I predicatori laici nelle confraternite medievali," in his *Ordo Fraternitatis. Confraternite e pietà dei laici nel Medioevo* (Rome: 1977), 3:1273–1289; David Levesley D'Avray, *The Preaching of the Friars: Sermons Diffused from Paris Before 1300* (Oxford: 1985); Darlene N. Pryds, "Monarchs, Lawyers, and Saints: Juridical Preaching on Holiness," in *Models of Holiness in Medieval Sermons, Proceedings of the International Symposium, Kalamazoo 4–7 May 1995* (Louvain-la-Neuve: 1996), 141–156.

at the formation of the good citizen (in some cases even the politically active citizen), and at the religious education of smaller groups—in short, at the betterment of the individual and to the spiritual and civil well-being of the collectivity.

2 Albertano da Brescia: From Politician to Writer and Preacher

Albertano da Brescia (c.1190s–c.1250s), one of the key figures of the Middle Ages, has been the object of many studies.⁶ He has attracted the attention of historians of literature, politics, culture, medieval civilisation, lay religions, and even economy.⁷ He is the author of three moral-didactic treatises and five confraternity sermons that enjoyed great diffusion and success.⁸ He stands

6 Angus Graham, “Albertanus of Brescia,” in *Key figures in medieval Europe. An Encyclopedia*, (ed.) Richard K. Emmerson (New York: 2006), 12–14.

7 In chronological order, and without any attempt to be comprehensive, see: Aldo Checchini, “Un giudice nel secolo decimoterzo: Albertano da Brescia,” [1911–1912], in his *Scritti giuridici e storico-giuridici* 1 (Padua: 1958), 185–235; Meersseman, “I predicatori laici nelle confraternite medievali”; D’Avray, *The Preaching of the Friars*; Enrico Artifoni, “Gli uomini dell’assemblea. L’oratoria civile, i concionatori e i predicatori nella società comunale,” in *La predicazione dei frati dalla metà del ‘200 alla fine del ‘300. Atti del Convegno, Assisi 13–15 ottobre 1994* (Spoleto: 1995), 141–188; James M. Powell, *Albertanus of Brescia: The Pursuit of Happiness in the Early Thirteenth Century* (Philadelphia: 1992); *Albertano da Brescia. Alle origini del razionalismo economico, dell’umanesimo civile, della grande Europa. Atti del convegno, Brescia 19–20 maggio 1994*, (ed.) Franco Spinelli, (Brescia: 1996); Enrico Artifoni, *Sapientia Salomonis*. “Una forma di presentazione del sapere retorico nei dettatori italiani (prima metà del sec. XIII),” in *La parole du prédicateur, V^e-XV^e siècle*, (eds.) Rosa Maria Dessì, Michel Lauwers (Nice: 1997), 291–310; Enrico Artifoni, “Prudenza del consigliare. L’educazione del cittadino nel *Liber consolationis et consilii* di Albertano da Brescia (1246),” in “*Consilium*.” *Teorie e pratiche del consigliare nella cultura medievale*, (eds.) Carla Casagrande, Chiara Crisciani, Silvana Vecchio (Florence: 2004), 195–216; Enrico Artifoni, “Tra etica e professionalità politica. La riflessione sulle forme di vita in alcuni intellettuali pragmatici del Duecento italiano,” in *Vie active et vie contemplative au Moyen Âge et au seuil de la Renaissance*, (ed.) Christian Trottman (Rome: 2009), 403–423; Lorenzo Tanzini, “Albertano e dintorni. Note su volgarizzamenti e cultura politica nella Toscana tardo-medievale,” in *La parola utile. Saggi sul discorso morale nel Medioevo* (Rome: 2012), 161–217; Fabiana Fraulini, “Disciplina della parola, educazione del cittadino. Analisi del *Liber de doctrina dicendi et tacendi* di Albertano da Brescia,” in *Studi di Storia della Filosofia. Sibi suis amicusque*, (ed.) Domenico Felice (Bologna: 2013), 79–102.

8 These are the editions. Treatises: Albertani Brixienis, *Liber consolationis et consilii ex quo hausta est fabula de Melibeo et Prudentia*, (ed.) Thor Sundby (Havniae: 1873); *De amore et dilectione Dei et proximi et aliarum rerum et de forma vite: an Edition*, (ed.) Sharon Lynn Hiltz, Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Pennsylvania 1980; *Liber de doctrina dicendi et tacendi. La parola del cittadino nell’Italia del Duecento*, (ed.) Paola Navone (Florence: 1998). Sermoni: Luigi F. Fè d’Ostiani, *Sermone inedito di Albertano giudice di Brescia* (Brescia: 1874) (henceforth,

at the intersection of lay preaching, the construction of urban value systems, the discipline and ethics of the word, confraternity studies, conciliar thought, work ethic. In order to better understand the reasons for this eclecticism, and subsequent attention paid to his works, we need to briefly review his life and literary production.

We know little about Albertano's life. Some information can be gleaned from the prologues and closing remarks of his treatises, and a little from some public acts (not many, to tell the truth). His birth and death dates are uncertain, but we normally place them in the 1190s and 1250s respectively. We know that he was born in Brescia and lived in the Sant'Agata quarter, in the west part of the city. We do not know his family name; what passes as his surname is simply a toponym (surnames had not yet become fixed). His family eventually adopted the surname "degli Albertani" in honour of him. We do not know his wife's name, but we do know he sired three sons—Vincenzo, Stefano, and Giovanni—to each of whom he dedicated one of his treatises. Giovanni, the youngest, became a medical doctor/surgeon (*in arte chirurgiae*). In official documents Albertano is described as a judge (*iudex*),⁹ but the term he applied to himself was *causidicus*, that is, a legal intermediary (a cross between lawyer, judge, advisor to colleagues and to clients),¹⁰ perhaps even with legal powers (his role in this is not clear), and, from a certain perspective, a man of letters. He had received a fine education, probably in Bologna; his works (full of biblical, classical, and legal allusions) reveal that he was an expert in the law, but also in grammar, dialectic, rhetoric, and theology.

Until 1238 Albertano led a very intense political life. He served as a representative of the commune of Brescia in important acts of the second Lombard League against Emperor Frederick II Hohenstaufen (r. 1220–50).¹¹ He thus sided with the Guelph, or anti-imperial, side. On 26 August 1238, he was captured at the siege of Gavardo (a town near Brescia) by imperial troops and jailed in Cremona, a Ghibelline city.¹² During his incarceration, Albertano composed his first treatise, the *Liber de amore et dilectione Dei et proximi*. Once freed, he

Sermone genovese); Albertano da Brescia, *Sermones quattuor*, (ed.) Marta Ferrari (Lonato BS: 1955) (henceforth, *Sermoni bresciani*). At the moment it seems that the useful site with digital and printed sources edited by Angus Graham is no longer available: <http://freespace.virgin.net/angus.graham/Albertano.htm>.

9 This is how he is described in the first legal document where his name appears (7 April 1226). Powell, *Albertanus of Brescia*, 2.

10 Artifoni, *Prudenza del consigliare*, n.18.

11 In 1226 and 1231; Powell, *Albertanus of Brescia*, 2.

12 Paolo Guerrini, "Albertano da Brescia," in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, 1 (Rome: 1960), 669.

returned to Brescia.¹³ From this point on, his involvement in public life diminished and he began to devote more time to his literary activities, composing two other treatises—the *Liber de doctrina dicendi et tacendi* (1245) and the *Liber consolationis et consilii* (1246)—and several sermons. The first of these sermons was composed (and, we assume, delivered) in 1243 when Albertano was in Genoa as an *assessor*, or legal advisor to the *podestà* (Em)manuel de Madio, from Brescia, and was addressed to his fellow *causidici* and notaries gathered in the garden of the house of one of his colleagues, the *causidico* Petrus de Nigro.¹⁴ The other four sermons in the collection were composed later, in Brescia; the last one is dated 1250, but we do not have dates for the previous three. They, too, were addressed to a group of jurists, but in this case only *causidici* close to the Franciscans.¹⁵ It is probable that this group of colleagues gathered near the church of San Giorgio outside the walls, the only Franciscan institution in town at the time. Later, in 1254, in celebration of the city's victory against Ezzelino III da Romano, the bishop authorised a new Franciscan convent to be erected in the district of Sant'Agata, where Albertano lived.¹⁶ At that time, however, Albertano was probably already dead—the last document to mention him (a peace treaty between Brescia and Bergamo) is dated 1251.¹⁷ Since we do not know the date of Albertano's death, it is impossible to hypothesise whether the five sermons are part of a complete or incomplete sequence.

Probably because they were so different from the treatises, the five sermons remained less divulged, less studied, and not translated into the vernacular. They do, however, contain points of considerable interest, be it because they introduce or refine themes that appear in the treatises, or because they touch on questions that are specific to sermon literature, such as poverty. In the pages that follow, we will focus on these sermons, their role as ethical and religious instruction for legal professionals, and their comments on the poor, the weak, the destitute who need to be protected by those who administer justice and distribute alms, in other words, those people who represent the other side of the coin of late medieval urban development.¹⁸

13 We do not know the date; probably after Frederick II's siege of Brescia (Oct. 1238) and before the emperor sent a large group of prisoners (among which Albertano's name does not appear) to southern Italy (1239). Carolus Borrelli, *Vindex Neapolitanae nobilitatis* (Naples: 1693), Appendix, 155–169.

14 *Sermone genovese*, 33.

15 *Sermoni bresciani*, 2: 17; *Sermoni bresciani*, 4: 55.

16 Cinzio Violante, "La chiesa bresciana nel medioevo," in *Storia di Brescia*, I, *Dalle origini alla caduta della signoria viscontea* (Brescia: 1963), 999–1124: 1077.

17 Powell, *Albertanus of Brescia*, 3.

18 Gabriella Piccinni, "All'apogeo: quale società? Uguaglianze e disuguaglianze nell'Italia medievale," in *La crescita economica dell'Occidente medievale. Un tema storico non ancora esaurito. Atti del Convegno, Pistoia 14–17 maggio 2015* (Rome: 2017), 383–407.

3 Sermon for Devout Jurists

Albertano's sermons are in Latin and directed to an educated public, that is, to the elites of the legal profession. He refers to his audience of *causidici* and notaries as a *congregatio*, not as a *schola* or a *consortium* or a *confraternitas*, the terms normally used to indicate a lay religious organisation. Even though experience teaches us not to focus too much on terminology, we do however note how the first sermon (the one delivered in Genoa) makes no reference at all to a religious context; it speaks of *causidici* and notaries who have gathered in a colleague's house on the occasion of the gathering of members of the Genoese college of *causidici* that had been approved by the Commune. In the Brescia sermons, instead, there are reference to the presence of Franciscans among the assembled listeners and to a chosen meeting place in a mendicant convent. In the first case, we are clearly in a corporative context where Albertano, probably because of his fame, was asked to speak officially on the spirituality and ethics that must inspire the life, that is, the profession of the *causidici*. This points out how even trade or professional organisations were, for a long time, places of religious socialisation and not only economic or charitable oversight, especially before the mid 13th century and after the mid 14th, that is, before and after their more "political" phase.¹⁹ With the Brescia sermons, instead, we seem more likely to be in a confraternal context, with a number of lay persons from the same trade or business gathering under the direction of the new mendicant order of Friars Minor.

On the whole, Albertano's sermons can be compared to the statutes of a confraternity, or, better still, to their reading and exegesis: they outline the qualities members ought to have, their duties, their obligations. Members of the two organisations (*congregationes*) Albertano addressed in Genoa and Brescia adhered to a *propositum*, that is, a goal or way to lead one's life. As James Powell pointed out, the term reappears in Albertano's *De amore et dilectione Dei et proximi*, this time referring to all of society and revising Seneca's use of the term (in the Middle Ages Seneca was seen as a source of moral advice useful in the spiritual life of both the laity and the clergy).²⁰ The task of explaining

19 Roberto Greci, "Economia, religiosità, politica. Le solidarietà delle corporazioni medievali nell'Italia del Nord," in *Cofradías, gremios, solidaridades en la Europa Medieval. Atti del Convegno, Estella 20–24 luglio 1992* (Pamplona: 1993), 75–111; Marina Gazzini, "Confraternite/corporazioni: i volti molteplici della "schola" medievale," in *Corpi, "fraternità," mestieri nella storia della società europea. Atti del Convegno, Trento 30 maggio–1 giugno 1996*, (ed.) Danilo Zardin (Rome: 1998), 51–71; republished in Marina Gazzini, *Confraternite e società cittadina nel medioevo italiano* (Bologna: 2006), 59–81.

20 Powell, *Albertanus of Brescia*, 42.

the regulations to which participants at the gathering were to adhere was entrusted to Albertano probably because, as a man of the law and of letters, he was more conversant with larger topics such as: justice, love of God, assistance to one's neighbour.

We are accustomed to thinking that sermons are delivered by the clergy, but we must realise instead that many were delivered by the laity even in circles not influenced by heretical movements. In confraternities, in fact, it was fairly common for a lay member to preach in front of his assembled brothers. We have evidence of this phenomenon not only in Albertano's time, but also before and after. The statutes of the confraternity of Sant'Appiano in Valdelsa (Tuscany), the oldest in Italy (11th century),²¹ already in its first paragraph requires that the rector (*maestro* or *abate*) be God-fearing and learned in Sacred Scripture, but not that he be a clergyman. The rector's knowledge of the Scriptures was meant to help him guide and correct the sodality's members.²² If Albertano was not the only layman to deliver sermons in a medieval confraternity, it seems, nonetheless, that he probably was the only one to do so in a church, and not in a private oratory or any other place. This was a testament to his erudition and culture.

Albertano's erudition is evident in the *auctoritates* he incorporates into works, all filled with "a sea of citations"²³ from the Bible, the Fathers (Augustine, Jerome), major ecclesiastical writers (Andreas Capellanus, Innocent III, Hugh of St Victor, Isidore of Seville, Martin of Braga, Petrus Alfonsi, Prosper of Aquitaine), the Latin classics (Alcuin, Boethius, Cassiodorus, Cato, Cicero, Horace, Lucan, Ovid, Prudentius, Publilius Syrus, Sallust, Seneca, Terence), juridical texts (the *Corpus Iuris Civilis*, Gratian's *Decretum*, the decretals of Gregory IX, Baldus), contemporary poets (Godfrey of Cambrai or of Winchester), collections of rhythmic poetry, and comedies (the anonymous 12th-century *Pamphilus*).²⁴ These all point to his rich and diverse cultural background, but also to practices of combining contemporary ethics with the legacy of Antiquity.

One of his most cited authors is Seneca. An eleventh-century codex of the *Epistulae ad Lucilium* currently in the Biblioteca Queriniana in Brescia contains more than 1200 annotations and about 300 drawings attributed to

21 Neslihan Şenocak, "Twelfth-Century Italian Confraternities as Institutions of Pastoral Care," *Journal of Medieval History*, 42 (2016), 202–225. Online at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03044181.2016.1141702> (Accessed 30th January 2018).

22 Meersseman, *Ordo fraternitatis*, 1:60.

23 Meersseman, *I predicatori laici nelle confraternite medievali*, 3:1279.

24 Franz G. Becker, *Pamphilus. Prolegomena zum Pamphilus "de amore" und kritische textausgabe* (Düsseldorf: 1972).

Albertano, who consulted the manuscript probably in the chapter of the local cathedral.²⁵ Some of the annotations in the codex reappear in Albertano's last two sermons; other citations from Seneca, always present in the sermons, seem instead to come from *florilegia* then in circulation.²⁶ As always, however, one must be careful when reconstructing the network of sources used by medieval writers because they could be many and not necessarily chronologically close to them.

4 Faith, Civism, and Professional Deontology

We now come to the contents of the sermons. We already know how the art of "speaking" and of "keeping silent" was particularly dear to Albertano; his treatise *Doctrina dicendi et tacendi* confirms it, but so do his sermons, especially the first one, delivered in Genoa in 1243, that constitutes a sort of prelude to his *De doctrina*, composed two years later. In that sermon, some of the advice Albertano gave was: "Offer words of comfort and goodness," "speak softly and say sweet words," "express yourself in a pleasant way so as to receive agreeable answers," "use pleasant, decent words and avoid foul language," "speak in a calm and pleasant way," "speak with knowledge about things that are certain and known," "speak wisely, without deceit and malice, with good intentions, and without hurting anyone."²⁷ The advice Albertano offers his colleagues revolves around the need to speak kindly, honestly, well, moderately, and judiciously.

In his *Liber de consolationis et consilii* Albertano argues that a society where relationships are governed by words, prudence, and moderation is naturally

25 Biblioteca Queriniana di Brescia, Cod. B 11 6. The annotations and drawings were first attributed to Albertano by Leighton D. Reynolds in his *The Medieval Tradition of Seneca's Letters* (Oxford: 1965) and then reaffirmed by recent scholars: Claudia Villa, "La tradizione delle *Ad Lucilium* e la cultura di Brescia dall'età carolingia ad Albertano," *Italia medioevale e umanistica*, 12 (1969), 9–51: 29–36; Laura Toselli, "Cinque secoli di lettori nelle postille al Seneca Queriniano," in *Libri e lettori a Brescia tra medioevo ed età moderna. Atti del Convegno, Brescia 16 maggio 2002*, (ed.) Valentina Grohovaz (Brescia: 2003), 105–132.

26 Meersseman, *I predicatori laici nelle confraternite medievali*, 3:1288. In the Middle Ages Seneca was known more from secondary sources than from his originals; see Gilles Gerard Meersseman, "Seneca maestro di spiritualità nei suoi opuscoli apocrifi dal XII al XV secolo," *Italia medioevale e umanistica*, 16 (1973), 43–135; Pasquale Smiraglia, "Presenza di Seneca nella cultura del XII secolo," in *Seneca e i cristiani. Atti del Convegno, Milano 12–14 ottobre 1999*, (ed.) Antonio Pantaleo Martina (Milan: 2001), 265–281; Carla Maria Monti, "Episodi della fortuna di Seneca nell'Umanesimo italiano," *Analecta Brixiana*, (2007), 247–277.

27 *Sermone genovese*, 36–38.

opposed to one where physical violence and immoderation dominate. Because of such a view, Albertano is considered to be one of the founders of the ethics of communal society, a society in which conflicts are resolved by discussion in assembly halls for the sake of the common good and where physical violence is kept in check. Usually, this pedagogical and ethical project is connected to the politics and circles of the “bourgeoisie” (the *Popolo*) to which Albertano himself belonged. In Brescia the *Popolo* was very politically active from early on: already in 1196, the *Brixienis populus* challenged the nobility and, four years later, formed its own party, the *societas sancti Faustini* that for many decades opposed the *societas militum* until, in the 1270s, it finally gained firm control of the city.²⁸ The defaming paintings of the nobility that the *Popolo* commissioned for the Palazzo Comunale date, in fact, from this time.²⁹

We should not, however, ignore the fact that the same language in defence of peace and justice is to be found in “bipartisan” institutional contexts. Such is the case with the Milizia della Vergine, also known as “dei frati Gaudenti,” (Jovial Friars) at least in its initial phase (c.1261–1300). This was a religious order composed of members of the Communal aristocracy, both Guelph and Ghibelline, both noble and *popolani*, who, thanks to their perceived bipartisanship, were able to govern communes such as Bologna and Florence.³⁰ Their political fortune, however fleeting, advanced under the banner of the Virgin and in a language of peace, concord, faith, charity, decency, justly, common good, and contempt for worldly vanities. More than the prerogatives of a faction, these were typically communal concepts and language that stood in opposition to feudal culture.

Those who have studied Albertano have already abundantly pointed out how, in his sermons, he sought to improve his colleagues and *confratelli* both morally and spiritually, and how, more generally, he sought to advance the political and moral education of his fellow citizens. The “social” aspect of his sermons, which can be identified in what he says against poverty and social

28 Alfredo Bosio, “Il Comune,” in *Storia di Brescia*, 1:559–710; John Koenig, *Il «popolo» dell'Italia del nord nel XIII secolo* (Bologna: 1986), 421–428.

29 Giancarlo Andenna, “La storia contemporanea in età comunale: l'esecrazione degli avversari e l'esaltazione della signoria nel linguaggio figurativo. L'esempio bresciano,” in *Il senso della storia nella cultura medievale italiana (1100–1300)*. *Atti del Convegno, Pistoia 14–17 maggio 1993* (Pistoia: 1995), 345–360; Giuliano Milani, “Prima del Buongoverno. Motivi politici e ideologia popolare nelle pitture del Broletto di Brescia,” in *Studi Medievali*, 49 (2008), 19–85.

30 Marina Gazzini, “Reti di solidarietà e di religiosità comunali. Gli ordini del Consorzio dello Spirito Santo e della Milizia della beata Maria Vergine Gloriosa, o dei frati Gaudenti,” in *Identità cittadine e aggregazioni sociali in Italia, secoli XI–XV*. *Atti del Convegno, Trieste 28–30 giugno 2010*, CERM, (ed.) Miriam Davide, (Trieste: 2012), 243–258.

inferiority, has also not been overlooked. A passage from the first sermon touching on the duty to provide legal aid to the poor, is very indicative of this. In the sermon, Albertano approaches the question of how one should behave professionally in order to follow virtue: "We can, in fact, season our discipline with the flavour of virtue and, thanks to our skills, we can influence with the taste of reason, with the salt of justice, and with the sweetness of legal precepts the actions of those who turn to us."³¹ He then lists the ways in which his colleagues can remain virtuous when someone comes to them for a legal opinion: they must tell the truth, calm the anger, hatred, and any other disturbance of the spirit in those that seek their advice, they must not yield to their demands for vengeance, and they must ask for a just, not an exaggerated remuneration. He then adds that one must not ask any remuneration for advice offered to "beggars, the poor, the weak, orphans, widows, and other destitute people."³² This last clarification on the duty to offer advice freely to those who cannot afford to pay for it recalls an imperial legal tradition dating back to the 4th century (but already followed by the Church in the 1st-3rd centuries when it identified the poor as people in need of protection and spoke out in favour of the justice to be rendered to *miserabiles personae*).³³ The category of *miserabiles* changed with the times: alongside the orphans, widows, sick, and invalids of the Constantinian period, the Middle Ages added the poor, beggars, pilgrims, Crusaders, the defenceless, and then, in the 12th-13th century, merchants as well.³⁴ The justice to be rendered to the *miserabiles* was therefore not a novelty in Albertano, but a reminder of that specific favour they had long enjoyed and served as a double opportunity for them to seek both imperial and episcopal justice.³⁵

³¹ *Sermone genovese*, 43–44.

³² *Sermone genovese*, 43.

³³ The first imperial decree was Constantine's constitution of 334 (Cod. 3.14); see Cecilia Natalini, *Per la storia del foro privilegiato dei deboli nell'esperienza giuridica altomedievale. Dal tardo antico a Carlo Magno* (Bologna: 2008). For later centuries, see Maria Gigliola di Renzo Villata, "Dottrina, legislazione e prassi in tema di tutela nell'Italia del Duecento," in *Confluence des droits savants et des pratiques juridiques. Atti del Convegno, Montpellier 12–14 dicembre 1977* (Milan: 1979), 373–434.

³⁴ Merchants entered the category because, as men who travelled and thus exposed themselves to risks, hardships, and dangers, they were comparable to pilgrims; see Vito Piergiovanni, "Il mercante e il diritto canonico medievale: 'Mercatores in itinere dicuntur miserabiles personae,'" in *Proceedings of the Eighth International Congress of Medieval Canon Law. Atti del Convegno, San Diego 21–27 agosto 1988*, (ed.) Stanley Chodorow (Vatican City: 1992), 617–631, republished in Vito Piergiovanni, *Norme, scienza e pratica giuridica tra Genova e l'Occidente medievale e moderno*. 2 vols (Genoa: 2012), 617–634.

³⁵ Canon 7 of the Synod of Serdica (343) established the rules for episcopal intervention on behalf of the poor at imperial tribunals; see Natalini, *Per la storia del foro privilegiato dei*

Albertano was clearly adhering to this tradition and language. The concept of providing assistance, both legal and material, to the weak was not alien to the practice of his time and the environment he frequented. In their oaths of office, the *podestà* of the time generally swore to look after the *personae miserabiles*.³⁶ The first rubric of the statutes of Brescia opens with the *podestà*'s commitment to work in favour of all the citizens of Brescia and its surroundings, that is "men and women, clergy and laity, nuns and monks, orphans, widows, and children."³⁷ For someone in the legal profession in the 13th century, therefore, assistance to, and care for the poor had quite a multiplicity of meanings.

5 Justice and Poverty

As the years passed, Albertano adopted even more "revolutionary" tones. In his second Brescia sermon (the third in the series) we read of the duty his *causidici* colleagues have "to free, by force if necessary, the poor from the powerful, on the example of the Lord who, as the Prophet says, freed the poor from the powerful, the poor who had no defender."³⁸ This passage comes as no surprise because the common theme for the Brescia sermons is poverty.

The first Brescia sermon (and second in the series), for example and despite its title, *Sermo factus super illuminatione et super spiritali et corporali refectiōe*, deals with giving alms to the poor. Meersseman attributed the discrepancy between title and content to an error on the part of the rubricators or copyists. In fact, it may not be an error at all since the sermon revolves around the oil/charity metaphor. Just like oil, charity floats above all other virtues.³⁹ Just as oil has three functions—to provide light, to season food, and to anoint the body—so charity serves to point to the true light, to season other virtues, and to give sacred unction, thereby leading us to prefer justice over injustice.⁴⁰

deboli, 37. The poor had the right to be helped by other members of the clergy, as well; in Gratian's *Decretum* the clergy is allowed to ignore the ruling against engaging in commerce if this restriction put orphans and widows at risk; see Piergiovanni, *Il mercante e il diritto canonico medievale*, 619.

36 Rinaldo Comba, "Dimensioni economiche e sociali dell'indigenza (fine XII–metà XIV secolo)," in *La conversione alla povertà nell'Italia dei secoli XII–XIV*. Atti del Convegno, Todi 14–17 ottobre 1990, (ed.) Enrico Menestò (Spoleto: 1991), 32–52: 36–38.

37 Andrea Valentini, *Gli statuti di Brescia dei secoli XII al XIV illustrati e documenti inediti* (Venice: 1898), rubric 1.

38 *Sermoni bresciani*, 2:30.

39 *Sermoni bresciani*, 1:5.

40 *Sermoni bresciani*, 1:5.

In order to have value, charity must be done in secret—"let your left hand not know what your right hand is doing"—and willingly.⁴¹ The sermon then refers to the works of mercy by citing the prophet Isaiah,⁴² a reduced version of the works of mercy recommended in the well-known passage from Matthew that had become central in the catechesis of the faithful starting with the Gregorian reform and becoming ever more prevalent from the 12th century on.⁴³

The second Brescia sermon, on the other hand, is all about poverty: how to recognise it, classify it, assist it, use it.⁴⁴ The same *congregatio* gathers together "in honour of God and for the sustenance (*refezione*) of the poor," while great merits will fall upon those who meditate on poverty.⁴⁵ Albertano then adds that one must reflect upon all the various forms of poverty and distinguish between the indigent who lack what is necessary (*egeni*), those who have little (*pauperes*), and those completely devoid of any means (*inopes*).⁴⁶ The *pauperes* are, in turn, subdivided into those who are poor in substance and those who are poor in spirit. The poor in spirit will be rewarded after death because theirs will be the kingdom of heaven, but the poor in substance need earthly justice. To us, the words *pauper*, *egens/egenus*, and *inops/indigens* sound like synonyms, but not so to medieval writers; it is likely that, in formulating his thoughts on these three categories, Albertano had other authors of medieval social categories in mind, for example, Bernard of Clairvaux or Peter of Blois.⁴⁷ In his third Brescia sermon Albertano adds a fourth category to the traditional three: the weak (*debiles*). There is a good reason for it. As is well known, in the Middle Ages the term *pauper* stood in antithesis not so much to the term *dives* (wealthy), but to the term *potens* (powerful),⁴⁸ and here lies the contraposition Albertano sets up in the second Brescia sermon between *pauperes* and *potentes*, a distinction that had biblical roots and alluded to the liberation of the oppressed. These are distinctions drawn from Sacred Scripture and

41 *Sermoni bresciani*, 1:4–5.

42 *Sermoni bresciani*, 1:7.

43 Luciano Manicardi, *La fatica della carità. Le opere di misericordia* (Bose: 2010), 57–70.

44 *Sermoni bresciani*, 2:19.

45 *Sermoni bresciani*, 2:19.

46 *Sermoni bresciani*, 2: 19–20.

47 For both Bernard of Clairvaux and Peter of Blois, the *pauperes* were an ensemble of unfortunate towards whom the provision of material help was an obligation of justice; the *egeni* were, for the most part, the needy, orphans, widows, and pilgrims; the *indigentes* were those who, for random reasons, lacked everything. Michel Mollat, *I poveri nel medio-evo* (Rome: 1983), 6.

48 Karl Bosl, "Potens und Pauper. Begriffsgeschichtliche Studien zur gesellschaftlichen Differenzierung im frühen Mittelalter und zum 'Pauperismus' des Hochmittelalters," in idem, *Frühformen der Gesellschaft im mittelalterlichen Europa* (Munich: 1964), 106–134.

from theological/patristic writings, but in the Middle Ages they had a daily application. Reflection on poverty should not, in fact, be tied only to rhetorical discourses, but to the constant presence of the poor in society. Albertano's interest in the poor and in poverty arises not just as a topic for an occasional speech, but as an observation of the reality around him.

The third Brescia sermon (the fourth in the series) also revolves around a theme that is partly concrete, partly metaphorical: the *convivium*. The title itself, points this out: *Sermo factus ad cognoscendum que sint in convivio necessaria et quomodo debeamus intelligere super egenos et pauperes*. The *convivium* in this context is the confraternal banquet, the social practice that connected the ancient rite of Christian *agape* (αγάπη), in Latin *caritas*, to the community banquet that included the mass and the ritual of the Eucharist. The confraternal banquet was a practice that would be severely criticised by the opponents of confraternal religiosity who judged it to be a recreational and materialistic indulgence.⁴⁹ But the *convivium*, as Dante's work by the same title confirms,⁵⁰ also referred to the symposium of the wise who gather to partake from the table of knowledge. In Albertano's sermon, the multiplicity of meanings joins with reality: his sermon is, in fact, addressed to a group of wise men and judges gathered at a confraternal banquet.

In dealing with banquets, we end up considering who should or should not be invited. Drawing on Scripture, Albertano says that fornicators, the avaricious, idol worshippers, slanderers, the greedy, and drunkards are not to be invited (1 Cor 5:11); one should, instead, invite the poor and the weak (Lk 14:12–13). He then praises the fact that the *causidici* of Brescia are wont to invite the *pauperes Minores*, that is, the Franciscans, to their society's banquets.⁵¹

49 From Boncompagno da Signa who in the first half of the 13th century saw “many people of many countries entering a confraternity or brotherhood in order to fill their stomach” (Boncompagno, *Cedrus*, in Ludwig Rockinger, *Briefsteller und Formelbüchern des elften bis vierzehnten Jahrhunderts*, 2. Munich: 1863, repr. New York 1961, 125) to Martin Luther who in 1519 asserted that people gathered in confraternities to indulge in gluttony and drunkenness “Sermon on the Blessed Sacrament of the Body of Christ and the Brotherhoods,” in *Luther's Works*, trans. Helmut Lehman, (Philadelphia: 1960), 35:67.

50 There is no space here for a discussion of Dante's debts to Albertano, but suffice it to say that previous scholars have suggested that Dante's *Divine Comedy* was influenced by the *Liber de consolationis et consilii*; see Santino Caramella, “Dante e Albertano da Brescia” in *Miscellanea in onore di G. Santini* (Palermo: 1956). One should add that this, as well as other hypotheses on Albertano's influence on Dante (Aldo Cecchini saw a connection between the *De vulgari eloquentia* and the *Doctrina dicendi et tacendi*; see his *Un giudice del secolo decimoterzo*) have been viewed as generic consonances of widely diffused themes of medieval moralism; see Manlio Pastore Stocchi, “Albertano da Brescia” in *Enciclopedia dantesca*, 1 (Rome: 1970), 1:96–97.

51 *Sermoni bresciani*, 3:38.

The reference to poverty as lived by the Franciscans and the praises Albertano lavishes on the Virgin Mary in the next sermon suggest that one should not exclude the possibility of a Mendicant influence on his thinking, especially in light not only of the Marian devotion that was so predominant in Mendicant circles, but also because of the importance that the question of wealth and ownership held for Franciscan thinkers.⁵² Albertano then lingers, once again, on the importance of eloquence, of a correct way to express oneself, and of justice, topics that were inevitable in a gathering of jurists. Albertano takes the evangelical injunction not to judge others lest one himself be judged (Lk 6:37) and adds a series of further instructions for his colleagues: “do not judge if you do not have the knowledge, the competence, and the authority; do not judge if there are doubts or without having pondered [the question]; do not judge if there is no need or usefulness; do not judge against reason and without fear of God.”⁵³

The fourth and last Brescia sermon (the fifth in the series) is dedicated to the fear of God that is the key that opens every door, though even in this sermon Albertano ends up focusing on the binomial justice/poverty.⁵⁴ One of the doors to open in order to arrive at “happiness” is the one that leads to one of the worst evils—poverty. “In the name of the fear of God let us expel every form of poverty.”⁵⁵ Every evil, including poverty, must be fought with the arms of justice. This means that a judge, lawyer, or legal counsel must refuse to help a friend, neighbour, relative, or powerful client who has behaved wrongly and against truth.⁵⁶ Faith and civic responsibility are thus inextricably linked with professional deontology.

Although there is no shortage of reflections on poverty in Albertano’s other treatises,⁵⁷ one should note that this is a theme he develops in a special way in his sermons. The treatises, too, engage with themes of ethical economy, but the core of their discussion lies with the problem of wealth, a wealth that must be accumulated honestly and profitably as a means, not a reason for living.⁵⁸ The sermons, on the other hand, speak more specifically about poverty. This

52 Giacomo Todeschini, *Ricchezza francescana: dalla povertà volontaria alla società di mercato* (Bologna: 2004).

53 *Sermoni bresciani*, 3:49.

54 *Sermoni bresciani*, 4:56–64.

55 *Sermoni bresciani*, 4:59.

56 *Sermoni bresciani*, 4:61.

57 *Necessitas*, that is the need that comes from indigence and is the root of conflict and, at the same time, the cause of social instability, is mentioned in the *Liber consolationis et consilii*, Chaps. XLIII, XLIV, XLV, and in the *De amore et dilectione Dei*, book III, Chapt. x.

58 Albertano, *De amore et dilectione Dei*, book II, Chaps. IV, XIV, XIX; book III, Chaps. I, IV. See also Flavio Felice, “Albertano da Brescia,” in *Dizionario di economia civile*, (eds.) Stefano Zamagni and Luigino Bruni (Rome: 2009), 27–35: 32–33.

probably depends on the different public to which they are addressed—the treatises were addressed in a broader way to the communal elites, both political and economic, while the sermons were addressed in a more circumscribed way to men of the law gathered into a sodality that included, among its tasks, the distribution of alms.

The link between justice and poverty was very close. Poverty, Albertano reminds his audience, can be overcome with economic assistance, but also with justice. *Caritas* and *iustitia* recur often in his sermons and there is much that is “communal” here. In fact, Albertano was not alone in making this connection: other contemporary intellectuals also placed themselves as lay guides for the fellow citizen’s “good life”—we need only remember the notary Gherardo (or Girardo) Patecchio from Cremona, the judge Bono Giamboni from Florence, or the teacher Bonsevin da la Riva from Milan, who were all engaged not only in their professional activities, but also in the composition of moral and didactic works that reflect the ideas circulating in civic circles on the margins of ecclesiastical institutions and religious movements.⁵⁹ They all, also, wrote about poverty. However, while Gherardo Patecchio and Bonsevin da la Riva invited their readers to respect poverty because it was blessed by God (thereby adhering to a traditional vision that sought to maintain the social and economic status quo), Albertano and Bono Giamboni went, instead, somewhat beyond this and advanced more original points of view in the name of a justice that needed to exist not only in heaven, but on earth as well. Giamboni, who, as is known, was inspired by Albertano,⁶⁰ radicalised the discussion by wishing for a redistribution of earthly wealth among the poor, convinced that if this were done no one would need to go begging and all would have what they needed to live. Although canonists and civilists argued for the legal protection of those who were in need, even to the point of justifying theft in extreme cases of survival,⁶¹ Giamboni’s appeal for a redistribution of wealth in order to eliminate poverty was, nonetheless, a sure sign of a new sensibility.⁶²

It is important to underline that it was two judges, Bono Giamboni and Albertano da Brescia, who formulated these observations because, in the wake of a long Christian tradition that had flowed into imperial circles, the poor were, primarily, those who did not have justice. Poverty is, in fact, a question of injustice. It is fundamentally important to keep the judicial and procedural

59 Giuliana Albini, *Poveri e povertà nel Medioevo* (Rome: 2016), 103–104.

60 Tanzini, *Albertano e dintorni*, 183.

61 Mario Ascheri, “Note per la storia dello stato di necessità. La sistemazione canonistica,” *Studi senesi* 87 (1975), 7–94; Francesco Viganò, *Stato di necessità e conflitti di doveri. Contributo alla teoria delle cause di giustificazione e delle scusanti* (Milan: 2000); Paolo Prodi, *Settimo non rubare. Furto e mercato nella storia dell'Occidente* (Bologna: 2009).

62 Albini, *Poveri e povertà nel medioevo*, 104.

implications of this argument in mind because, for example, it was exactly the language around poverty that in the Middle Ages allowed a fringe of citizens (*cives*)—those who were able to claim the status of being poor—to enter the judicial system from which they were excluded. Lacking material power, the poor and their representatives, their ecclesiastical and lay protectors, found in the language of poverty a legitimisation of the moral power to exert pressure on those who held power.⁶³

6 Albertano's Legacy. Beyond the Commune, Italy, and the Middle Ages

Reflecting on the space Albertano dedicated in his confraternity sermons to the theme of poverty and social inferiority allows us to understand his education, training, and action more clearly, but also his legacy, especially if we take a longer view. As we already mentioned, his works were veritable best-sellers in Europe, both in their original Latin and in subsequent translations. They were to be found everywhere and for a long time, reaching a vast and diversified public that, as time passed, became much wider than the restricted circles of professional elites in Italian communes and reached a wide range of people hungry for ethical and religious education. The way of life suggested by Albertano recalled the canonical spirituality present in Augustine's rules for the religious life, rules that the late Middle Ages found to be most appropriate for a large number of communities. With Albertano, however, we see the transition from a rule for the religious life to a rule for the secular life instilled with Christian values; in his own words, "religion is more in the hearts of people than in an earthly place."⁶⁴ Albertano thus speaks as a layman to other laymen, and this explains his success both in his own time and in the centuries that followed.

The fame of Albertano's treatises was, in fact, immense. Brunetto Latini, for example, incorporated nearly all of the *Doctrina loquendi et tacendi* into his *Tresor*.⁶⁵ But it was the *Liber de consolationis et consilii* that enjoyed the greatest

63 For the pauperisation of certain categories, such as the supplicants who declared themselves poor in order to gain access to justice, see Massimo Vallerani, "La pauvreté et la citoyenneté dans les suppliques du XIVe siècle," in *Suppliques. Lois et cas dans la normativité de l'époque moderne*, (eds.) Simona Cerutti and Massimo Vallerani, *L'Atelier du Centre de recherches historiques*, 13 (2015), unpaginated digital edition, online at <http://journals.openedition.org/acrh/6547> (accessed 30 January 2018).

64 *Liber de amore et dilectione*, l. iv, Chapt. xxiii.

65 Thor Sundby, *Della vita e delle opere di Brunetto Latini* (Florence: 1884), 171–177.

success and was among the most widespread works of the Middle Ages, with many translations into the Italian vernacular, both complete and partial, all with different translators, many of which anonymous,⁶⁶ and in various other European languages—French, Castilian, Catalan, German, Dutch, Czech.⁶⁷ From a French rendition by Renaud de Louens entitled *Livre de Mélibée et de Dame Prudence*, Geoffrey Chaucer drew his story of Melibee for the *Canterbury Tales*.⁶⁸ The success of the *Liber de consolationis et consilii* reached into the 19th century when its earlier Italian translations were deemed to be fundamental texts in the birth of the Italian national language.⁶⁹ It has also reached to our present day as the inspiration for a series of crime fiction novels.⁷⁰

The spread of Albertano's works coincided with the circulation of collections of philosophical sayings, religious texts, didactic works. Albertano thus entered into that repertory of philosophical, sacred, and moral texts used by many writers, preachers, and authors of confraternity statutes, that is, by those who had to deal with a text and shared in the belief that the written word had the power to be useful and salvific. Albertano's sermons also enjoyed widespread diffusion. Various manuscript copies dating from the 13th to the 15th century can be found in libraries in Italy and at the Vatican, as well as in France, Holland, England, Ireland, Germany, Austria, the Czech Republic, Poland, and Russia.⁷¹ They did not enjoy the fame of his treatises, but the reason for this may lie in the more restricted public to which they were addressed—judges, notaries, *causidici*—and the guild or confraternal context for which they were intended.

Albertano's lay sermons to his colleagues in the law point to the growing importance of pedagogical literature, and especially sermon literature by laymen, in late medieval guilds and confraternities and, by extension, in the

66 There were four complete translations, and a vast number of partial translations. Tanzini, *Albertano e dintorni*.

67 Fabrizio Cigni, "Sulla più antica traduzione francese dei tre trattati morali di Albertano da Brescia," in *"Le loro prigioni": scritture dal carcere. Atti del Convegno, Verona 25–28 maggio 2005*, (eds.) Anna Maria Babbi and Tobia Zanon (Verona: 2007), 35–60.

68 *Sources and Analogues of the Canterbury Tales*, eds. Robert M. Correale, Mary Hamel. 2 vols (Martlesham, UK: 2005).

69 Fabiana Fraulini, "Francesco Selmi e i trattati morali di Albertano da Brescia. L'importanza della lingua nazionale per l'Italia unita," in *Bibliomanie* 38 (2015), unpaginated digital edition, online at http://www.bibliomanie.it/francesco%20selmi_trattati_morali_albertano_brescia_fraulini.htm (Accessed 30 June 2017).

70 Albertano is the detective in a series of murder mysteries set in 13th-century Brescia; they are the work of Enrico Giustacchini and were published between 2014 and 2018.

71 Angus Graham, "Albertanus of Brescia: A Supplementary Census of Latin Manuscripts," *Studi Medievali* 41.1 (2000), 429–445; Paolo Divizia, "Additions and Corrections to the Census of Albertano da Brescia's Manuscripts," *Studi Medievali* 55.2 (2014), 801–818.

urban society of the time. With the advantage of collegiality, Albertano, like many lay preachers in confraternities in the centuries that were to follow, was able to reach out directly to his colleagues and provide them with moral, ethical, and religious concepts meant to be guiding principles for their personal life and spiritual salvation, but also to serve as the basis for civil society. Albertano's rich cultural background and extensive legal training may be exceptional, but they do point to the wide spectrum of sources and resources that were available to the laity in their search for temporal and eternal peace. The recitation of sermons by laymen in guilds and confraternities was to become a standard feature of lay religious associations and advance the spirit of personal commitment to one's neighbour that these sodalities sought to foster. In later centuries we find people such as the philosopher Angelo Poliziano or the dramatist Giovan Maria Cecchi composing sermons for recitation by young men in confraternities,⁷² and cynical writers such as Niccolò Machiavelli parodying them⁷³—the highest of compliments.

Translated by Konrad Eisenbichler

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Cities of God or Structures of Superstition: Medieval Confraternities and Charitable Hospitals in the Early Modern World

David D'Andrea

1 Introduction

Inspired by the principles of Christian charity and supported by church authorities, confraternities developed rapidly in the Middle Ages and formed a vast array of local institutions to care for the sick and the poor. In the 16th century confraternal charitable activity came under increasing scrutiny both in Catholic territories, where civic leaders consolidated hospitals in the spirit of more efficient charity, and in Protestant lands, where reformers challenged the fundamental theological justification for religious associations. As Protestants were suppressing confraternities and confiscating their property in Europe, Catholics were exporting religious brotherhoods and their charitable institutions to the Americas and Asia.

This chapter will provide a historical overview of the theological interpretations that shaped the development of medieval and early modern confraternities and hospitals. In the premodern world biblical exegesis was not relegated to religious infighting but directly informed the secular implementation of poor policies and charitable institutions. The final sections of the article will discuss the historiographical and methodological approaches modern scholars have taken to untangle the complex nexus between the secular and religious impulses that have shaped our modern welfare system. A survey of the most recent studies reveals the limitations of the current scholarship and offers suggestions for the next generation of scholarship.

2 Medieval Theology and Good Works

Medieval theologians celebrated charity as a foundational virtue, a divine precept that would help perfect the soul on its journey to God. The laity embraced this virtue as part of the Catholic sacramental system of saving grace, and religious charity animated the innumerable hospitals, confraternities, and

religious orders of the Middle Ages.¹ Religious decrees, sermons, and pious literature encouraged not only the goal of Christian brotherhood but also the need to discriminate between the deserving and underserving poor. Charity was expressed in both spiritual alms (educating the ignorant, admonishing sinners, comforting the sorrowful) and corporal acts of mercy (feeding the hungry, sheltering the homeless, clothing the naked). The lay religious brotherhood, modelled on the clerical state, provided a dynamic entity for charitable initiatives. John Henderson sums up the role of confraternities well: "Confraternities can be seen as the institutionalisation of this highest of Christian Virtues. Their religious and social activities expressed the dual nature of Charity: to promote the vertical devotional links through love of God and the horizontal more social links with man through love of one's neighbour."²

Modern scholarship on confraternities began in Italy, where medievalists, searching for manifestations of lay religious devotion, explored the rich archives of the Italian city-states.³ Scholars found the Italian city-states awash in religious brotherhoods. These Italian urban associations allowed their members to pursue religious perfection while actively participating in civic life, striving to create what Augustine Thompson has called the "Cities of God."⁴ Governance of the politically and economically powerful confraternities offered the urban elite outlets for their civic ambitions, but confraternal membership also allowed men and women from more humble backgrounds to participate in important patronage projects. Italian Renaissance confraternity buildings and their hospitals were ornate and imposing structures, described with great pride as beautiful ornaments honouring God and the city.⁵ Confraternal charities, informed by the prevailing attitude toward the poor, were

1 For an overview of medieval charity see James Brodman, *Charity and Religion in Medieval Europe* (Washington: 2009), especially 9–44.

2 John Henderson, *Piety and Charity in Late Medieval Florence* (Oxford: 1994), 9.

3 For useful surveys of the development of confraternity studies and methodological approaches to the study of their charitable activities see Konrad Eisenbichler, "Italian Scholarship on Pre-Modern Confraternities in Italy," *Renaissance Quarterly* 50 (1997): 567–580; Christopher Black, "The Development of Confraternity Studies over the Past Thirty Years," in *The Politics of Ritual Kinship: Confraternities and Social Order in Early Modern Italy*, (ed.) Nicholas Terpstra (Cambridge: 2000), 9–29; and Thomas Frank, "Confraternite e assistenza," in *Studi Confraternali: Orientamenti, Problemi, Testimonianze*, (ed.) Marina Gazzini (Florence: 2009), 217–238.

4 Augustine Thompson, *Cities of God. The Religion of the Italian Communes 1125–1325* (Philadelphia: 2005). See also the introduction to David D'Andrea, *Civic Christianity in Renaissance Italy: The Hospital of Treviso, 1400–1530* (Rochester, NY: 2007).

5 See John Henderson, *The Renaissance Hospital: Healing the Body and Healing the Soul* (New Haven: 2006), particularly Chapter 5: "Splendid Houses of Treatment Built at Vast Expense: Wards and the Care of the Body and Soul."

driven by individual religious motivation and responded to communal needs. These dynamic associations administered a wide array of charitable institutions (hospices, hospitals, foundling homes, orphanages) and provided a myriad number of charitable services: comforting the condemned, alleviating poverty; providing girls with dowries; ransoming Christians captured by Muslims; educating the young; and providing university scholarships.

The independent governance of many confraternities, their often large financial endowments, and public religious activities brought them to the attention of political leaders, who wanted to oversee and regulate the powerful associations, and of ecclesiastical officials, who strove to ensure orthodoxy and the proper administration of pious bequests. Civil authorities eagerly supported the institutions and actively participated in them, but they also demanded that their statutes, activities, and membership be publicly vetted, approved, and registered. Confraternities were private associations with a very public role, administering a sacred trust that had to be closely regulated.

Ecclesiastical authorities enthusiastically supported confraternal activities as a Christian work. The Church's imprimatur came in the form of indulgences, a theological concept tied to good works and Purgatory. Indulgences were issued for hospitals, orphanages, foundling hospitals, and many other charitable activities throughout Western Christendom. Confraternities proudly displayed and promulgated these documents, publicizing the benefits that accrued to those who donated their time or treasure to the confraternity. There is no doubt about the popularity of both confraternities and indulgences. Giovanna Casagrande notes the parallel growth of confraternities and increase in indulgences from the 13th century to the eve of the Reformation.⁶ Patronised by the community's most important families and endorsed by ecclesiastical authorities, confraternities were some of the most powerful political and economic institutions in most European communities. By the 16th century confraternities were ubiquitous. In large cities and rural hamlets throughout Europe, brothers and sisters prayed for their members, provided for the deserving poor, and offered specialised medical care.⁷

6 On indulgences see *Promissory Notes on the Treasury of Merits: Indulgences in Late Medieval Europe*, (ed.) R.N. Swanson (Brill: 2006), in particular the article by Giovanna Casagrande, "Confraternities and Indulgences in Italy in the Later Middle Ages," 37–63.

7 There are a number of regional studies on confraternities and hospitals. For England see: Nicholas Orme and Margaret Webster, *The English Hospital, 1070–1570* (New Haven: 1995) and David Crouch, *Piety, Fraternity, and Power: Religious Guilds in Late Medieval Yorkshire, 1389–1547* (York: 2000). For Spain see: Maureen Flynn, *Sacred Charity: Confraternities and Social Welfare in Spain, 1400–1700* (Ithaca: 1989) and James Brodman, *Charity and Welfare: Hospitals and the Poor in Medieval Catalonia* (Philadelphia: 1998). For France see: *Histoire des Hôpitaux*

In the early modern period, cultural, economic, and religious change challenged many well-established medieval institutions and norms, and confraternities, an integral part of religious and civic life, were at the centre of debate. In response to the increase in the number of urban poor, Christian humanists proposed new social policies to foster well-ordered, efficient, and just Christian polities.⁸ In response to epidemic diseases, communities implemented new health policies, consolidated hospitals, and issued new poor laws.⁹ The theological revolution of the Reformation made the 16th century a true watershed in the history of charity and the perception of the poor.¹⁰ Unlike medieval or humanist calls for reform, the leaders of the Protestant Reformation did not want to improve Catholic charities or confraternities; they wanted to destroy them. The theology of salvation, political power, and charitable institutions were inseparable. As the early modern world fought to define the Christian community, the fate of confraternities hung in the balance.

3 Protestant Reformation: Dismantling Superstitious Structures

The Protestant Reformation began with a subtle but radical reworking of Catholic theology, in particular the role of charity, works, and grace. One scholar

en France, (ed.) Jean Imbert (Toulouse, 1982). For Portugal see: Isabel dos Guimarães Sá, "Social and Religious Boundaries in Confraternities, Prisons and Hospitals in Renaissance Portugal," in *Brotherhood and Boundaries. Fraternità e barriere*, (eds.) Adriano Prosperi, Stefania Pastore, Nicholas Terpstra (Pisa: 2011), 171–189. For the Low Countries see: Braum Van den Hoven Van Genderen and Paul Trio, "Old Stories and New Themes: An Overview of the Historiography of Confraternities in the Low Countries from the Thirteenth to the Sixteenth Centuries," in *Religious and Laity in Western Europe, 1000–1400. Interaction, Negotiation and Power*, (eds.) Emelia Jamrozak and Janet Burton (Turnhout: 2007), 357–384. For essays on hospitals and confraternities in Austria, Hungary, Germany, and the Czech Republic see *Europäisches Spitalwesen: Institutionelle Fürsorge in Mittelalter und Früher Neuzeit/Hospitals and Institutional Care in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, (eds.) Martin Scheutz, Andrea Sommerlechner, Herwig Weigl, and Alfred Stefan Weiß (Vienna: 2008). For a recent synthesis of European scholarship on confraternities and charity see Brodman, *Charity and Religion in Medieval Europe*, especially the section "Confraternities," 187–207.

8 Athouguia Alves Abel, "The Christian Social Organism and Social Welfare: The Cases of Vives, Calvin and Loyola," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 20 (1989): 3–22.

9 Francesco Bianchi, "Italian Renaissance Hospitals: An Overview of the Recent Historiography," *Mitteilungen des instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung* 115 (2007): 394–403.

10 On poor laws and the attitude toward the poor see Carter Lindberg, *Beyond Charity: Reformation Initiatives for the Poor* (Minneapolis: 1993); Bronislaw Geremek, *Poverty: A History*, trans. Agnieszka Kolakowska (Cambridge, MA: 1994); Mark Cohen, "Introduction: Poverty and Charity in Past Times," *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* (2005): 347–360.

succinctly summarised the theological revolution of the Reformation as follows: "Promoted from its traditional subordination to *caritas* among the three theological virtues, faith was redefined by Lutheran and Reformed Protestant theologians as the all-or-nothing cornerstone of Christian life, the result of no human merit, goodness, effort, or cooperation with God."¹¹ This theological inversion demoted good works, undermined the doctrines that had encouraged the laity to establish confraternities, and changed the perception of the poor. As the Protestant message spread across Europe, political leaders were forced to decide whether or not to reform Catholic Christianity and consequently restructure the system of charity. At the core of this system was the lay religious brotherhood. Were confraternities perverse manifestations of a misguided Catholic devotion that misappropriated funds? Were their hospitals and orphanages cities of God or structures of superstition?

The Reformation began in 1517 with Martin Luther's questioning of indulgences and Purgatory. His list of criticisms rapidly grew into a series of treatises attacking all aspects of Catholic piety and devotion. In "The Blessed Sacrament of the Holy and True Body of Christ, and the Brotherhoods" (1519) Luther described confraternities as self-interested drinking clubs and argued: "There would far better be no brotherhoods in the world than such an abomination should be permitted. Temporal lords and cities should unite with the clergy in abolishing it."¹² Luther's appeal to secular rulers was strategic. Civic and military leaders would have to forcibly abolish confraternities, expel clergy, and confiscate confraternal and monastic property. The Lutheran system of charity would be funded by the consolidation of confiscated religious assets into the Common Chest, administered by a lay board of directors for the good of the community.¹³ Medieval Catholic hospitals would be systematically transformed into civic charities.

John Calvin's effort to reform the Christian community also embraced a new theology of salvation that could not tolerate confraternities. Reformed theology called all Christians to the same religious duties. Joining a confraternity

11 Brad S. Gregory, *The Unintended Reformation: How a Religious Revolution Secularized Society* (Cambridge, MA: 2012), 208.

12 Martin Luther, "The Blessed Sacrament of the Holy and True Body of Christ, and the Brotherhoods," in Martin Luther, *Works of Martin Luther*, trans. Jeremiah Schindel (Philadelphia: 1916), 2:26–27.

13 For a case study in Protestant appropriation of medieval hospitals see H.C. Erik Midelfort, "Protestant Monastery? A Reformation Hospital in Hesse," in *Reformation Principle and Practice: Essays in Honour of Arthur Geoffrey Dickens*, (ed.) Peter Brooks (London: 1980), 71–93. Midelfort reminds us that the Reformation did not transform all institutions beyond recognition, for the hospitals of Hesse maintained much of the pre-Reformation hospital administration and structure.

to perform good works as a vehicle for one's perfection was both useless and repugnant. Calvin's Reformed communities rejected the doctrines and organisations (Purgatory, clergy, confraternities) that created the medieval system of charity and replaced it with a new welfare system based on the notion of a godly society. The Hospital of Geneva is a good example of medieval Catholic charities transformed into Reformed Protestant institutions. Geneva's reformed city council consolidated the eight medieval hospitals, including one named Box for All Souls in Purgatory, that cared for a variety of deserving poor. The new central hospital was funded by the confiscation of hospital patronies and subsidised by confiscated properties from other confraternities, churches, convents, and monasteries. A lay board of directors, the city's elite, replaced the friars or confraternal brothers who had previously administered the charities of Geneva. As part of the purging of the Catholic understanding of charity and obligations to the poor, the Reformed city council outlawed begging and expelled clergy from the city. The general hospital might perform similar services of the former institutions, but the hospital was no longer an expression of Christian piety; rather, it was an extension of Calvin's beloved consistory, responsible for the supervision of beliefs and morals.¹⁴

The English Reformation followed many of the patterns of reform and suppression that began on the Continent.¹⁵ The English government methodically dismantled an extensive and diverse Catholic charitable system of confraternities, hospitals, and alms-houses, deemed theologically unnecessary and politically dangerous. An 18th-century historian observed the political motivation and social ramifications of religious change. "These gilds after the Reformation, were defam'd for having been Structures of Superstition, and Places where the State then thought that Conspiracies were, or might be, form'd against them [...] Gilds, that were purely for particular Trades, were managed by the Professors of such Occupations, who often built Hospitals to maintain their Poor."¹⁶ The English poor, of course, still needed assistance, but the system shifted from voluntary religious donations to mandatory relief in individual parishes.

The Protestant theological transformation of charity created a new role and function for hospitals and ushered in the secular administration of welfare institutions. "With fraternities disbanded and charitable endowments in lay hands, if hospitals were to survive at all their purposes had to be redefined—and

14 Robert Kingdon, "Social Welfare in Calvin's Geneva," *The American Historical Review* 76 (1971): 50–69.

15 Paul Slack, *From Reformation to Improvement: Public Welfare in Early Modern England* (Oxford: 1999).

16 Thomas Gent, *History of Hull* (York: 1735), 80, cited in David Crouch, *Piety, Fraternity, and Power: Religious Guilds in Late Medieval Yorkshire, 1389–1547* (York: 2000), 244.

redefined by secular and civic governors.”¹⁷ English Puritans strove for “Godly cities” that were thoroughly reformed with houses of correction for the ungodly and idle. The civic hospitals in Gloucester, for example, were staffed with an “overseer of the manners of the poor,” indicating that public edification and social discipline were the goals of the new welfare institutions.¹⁸ The English examples illustrate the profound shift that was taking place between the 16th and 18th centuries. “The most important social virtue among early modern Lutherans and Reformed Protestants, at every social level from disciplined individuals through patriarchal households to well-ordered regimes as a whole, was therefore not *caritas* but obedience.”¹⁹ The Reformation removed the theological connection and moral obligation linking donors to the recipients of charity; the modern secular welfare state, with an emphasis on social discipline, was being formed.²⁰

In their assault on the fundamental Catholic doctrine of works, reformed theologians took direct aim at confraternities, which stood at the critical crossroad of ecclesiology, soteriology, and community. Executed by royal decree or city statute, the suppression and confiscation of confraternal patrimonies and monastic properties were tangible signs of theological reforms. Less obvious but perhaps more important for the history of charity was the changing perception of the poor and the community’s obligations to care for them. The 1510–1511 ordinances of the hospital of Santa Maria Nuova in Florence instructed nurses to “shelter and tend the sick poor who come to the hospital as they would Christ Himself.”²¹ Reformed theologians no longer viewed the poor as a reflection of Christ but as a blight on a well-ordered Christian society. In Calvin’s Geneva the poor were reviewed by the hospital’s board, which removed them from the welfare rolls if they did not conform or obey.²² England created workhouses and made sure the poor minded their manners.

4 Confraternities and Catholic Reform

The Protestant criticism of medieval piety had a mixed reception across Europe. Efforts to reform abuses and renew devotion were an integral part of

17 Slack, *From Reformation to Improvement*, 19–20.

18 Slack, *From Reformation to Improvement*, 48–49.

19 Brad S. Gregory, *Unintended Reformation*, 209.

20 For an overview of the secularisation thesis see John Sommerville, *The Secularization of Early Modern England: From Religious Culture to Religious Faith* (Oxford, 1992).

21 Cited in Henderson, *The Renaissance Hospital*, 197–198.

22 Jeannine Olson, *Calvin and Social Welfare: Deacons and the Bourse française* (London: 1989), 182.

Christian history; even before the Protestant Reformation there were many calls to curtail excesses in popular devotion and revitalise the church. The Catholic Reformation flourished with new religious orders, such as the Theatines, Somaschans, Barnabites, Oratorians, and Jesuits, that both cared for traditional categories of deserving poor and instituted new redemptive charities focused on education and care of marginal groups at risk of slipping into immorality or heresy. Confraternities had been an integral part of medieval religious life and would continue to be so in post-Tridentine devotion and piety.²³ Catholic religious and civic authorities invested heavily in religious brotherhoods as orthodox bulwarks against Protestant assault.²⁴ The Reformation did not lead to any significant changes in Catholic doctrine or practice; on the contrary, the Catholic Church reaffirmed centuries of established belief and vigorously defended Catholic devotion.

The Catholic defence of lay religious brotherhoods took place when Europeans began to circumnavigate the globe. Consequently, confraternities became an integral part of global religious evangelisation, and European Catholic brotherhoods took on an international dimension. The Portuguese and Spanish empires, which stretched from Japan to the Americas, established Catholic confraternities and hospitals as part of their evangelical and colonial efforts. Jesuit missionaries followed in the wake of Portuguese commercial exploration in Asia, and an extensive network of state-sponsored Misericórdia societies soon extended Portuguese royal power in China and Japan.²⁵ Spanish

23 On the Catholic Reformation see Robert Bireley, *The Refashioning of Catholicism, 1450–1700: A Reassessment of the Counter Reformation*, (Washington: 1999) and R. Po-Chia Hsia, *The World of Catholic Renewal, 1540–1770*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, UK: 2005).

24 On the role of Catholic and Counter-Reformation religious orders and confraternities see Kathryn Norberg, *Rich and Poor in Grenoble, 1600–1814* (Berkeley: 1985); *Confraternities and Catholic Reform in Italy, France, and Spain*, (eds.) John Patrick Donnelly and Michael W. Maher (Kirkville, Missouri: 1999); Marc Forster, *Catholic Revival in the Age of the Baroque: Religious Identity in Southwest Germany, 1550–1750* (Cambridge, UK: 2001); Lance Lazar, *Working in the Vineyard of the Lord: Jesuit Confraternities in Early Modern Italy* (Toronto: 2005); Tim McHugh, *Hospital Politics in Seventeenth Century France: The Crown, Urban Elites and the Poor* (Aldershot: 2007); and Joseph Bergin, *Church, Society, and Religious Change in France, 1580–1730* (New Haven: 2009).

25 On the missionary activity in Japan and China see Isabel dos Guimarães Sá, “Catholic Charity in Perspective: The Social Life of Devotion in Portugal and its Empire (1450–1700),” *e-Journal of Portuguese History* 2 (2004): 1–19; João Paulo Oliveira e Costa, “The Misericórdias Among Japanese Christian Communities in the 16th and 17th Centuries,” *Bulletin of Portuguese and Japanese Studies* 5 (2003): 67–79; João Paulo Oliveira e Costa, “The Brotherhoods (Confrarias) and Lay Support for the Early Christian Church in Japan,” *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 34 (2007): 67–84; Liam Matthew Brockey, *Journey to the East. The Jesuit Mission to China, 1579–1724* (Cambridge, MA: 2007); D.E. Mungello, *The Great Encounter of China and the West, 1500–1800* (Lanham: 2013).

missions to the Americas also established confraternities to promote Catholicism and convert native Americans, who also adopted the confraternal concept.²⁶ Franciscan missionaries were especially successful preaching charity as the most important Christian virtue and establishing confraternities, schools, and hospitals.²⁷ The Spanish were not the only Catholics to bring confraternities to the Americas: French missionaries established an international network of religious orders, confraternities, and charitable institutions in New France.²⁸ Instead of withering under Protestant assault, confraternities grew in importance during the Counter-Reformation. Catholic authorities supported the popular medieval associations as an ideal tool of re-Catholicisation, and international trade spread these uniquely Catholic organisations across the globe.

The Reformation did, however, force some institutional changes in the Catholic Church. One difference between medieval and post-Tridentine Catholicism was the greater oversight of religious activities and pious foundations. As John Bossy has argued, it was not their lack of orthodoxy or good works that brought confraternities to the attention of Catholic reformers. The Counter-Reformation Church could no longer tolerate independent lay organisations that performed disparate and unregulated works, regardless how long they had been sanctioned by popular devotion and practice.²⁹ The growth of national and international archconfraternities reflects the increasing centralisation and episcopal oversight of what had been relatively independent religious associations.

5 Enlightenment, Revolution, and Decline

The Council of Trent (1545–1563) codified the Catholic Church's response to the theological challenge of the Reformation. Bishops were charged to more diligently oversee and audit pious institutions and confraternities. As a result bishops discouraged the social independence of religious brotherhoods,

26 *Early Modern Confraternities in Europe and the Americas: International and Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, (eds.) Christopher Black and Pamela Gravestock (Aldershot: 2006).

27 Laura Dierksmeier, "From Isolation to Inclusion: Confraternities in Colonial Mexico City," in *Space, Place and Motion: Locating Confraternities in the Late Medieval and Early Modern City*, (ed.) Diana Bullen Presciutti (Leiden: 2017), 68–87.

28 On the important role of confraternities for the Catholic missionaries in New France see *A Concise History of Christianity in Canada*, (eds.) Terrence Murphy and Roberto Perin (Oxford: 1996), especially Terry Crowley's Ch. 1: "The French Regime to 1760."

29 John Bossy, "The Counter-Reformation and the People of Catholic Europe," *Past and Present* 47 (1970): 51–70, especially 59.

channelling popular devotion into more manageable and compliant parish churches. An unforeseen consequence of episcopal control was that confraternities began to lose their popular support and ability to meet changing societal needs. In the early modern period confraternities went into a long period of decline, so much so that by the 18th century Catholic Enlightenment thinkers were openly criticizing confraternities. The Italian priest and historian, Ludovico Muratori, and other Italian scholars wrote of the abuses of confraternities and called for the suppression of outdated associations.³⁰ As Protestant rulers had done centuries before, Catholic rulers reformed or suppressed confraternities to weaken local institutions and consolidate political power. From King Henry VIII of England in the 16th century to the Grand Dukes of Tuscany in the 18th, political rulers, free of ecclesiastical censure, confiscated confraternities' wealth and reallocated these private resources for the public good.³¹

The 18th century also witnessed a series of political and social revolutions that unleashed a violent and radical break with the medieval past. Catholic institutions, symbols of the ancien régime, suffered in the fury to replace traditional social organisations with the bureaucracy of a modern, egalitarian polity. Religious brotherhoods were seen as obstacles to the creation of a modern nation. The French Revolution "swept religiously authorised trust networks including confraternities from public life, substituting government-controlled authoritative organisations including patriotic clubs, National Guard units, revolutionary committees, and officially constituted municipalities."³² Social elites transformed the rituals and organisations of their Catholic brotherhoods into new symbols and vehicles for cultural and political activity. Scholars continue to investigate how the confraternal meeting house became the Freemason lodge.³³

6 Confraternities: Medieval or Modern?

The French Revolution and Enlightenment typically mark the end of the early modern period; this periodisation is reflected in confraternity studies. Modern scholarship readily relegates confraternities to the medieval world of ritual and belief in the supernatural. The 16th-century paradigm shift in poor relief and

³⁰ See Eisenbichler, "Italian Scholarship," 568.

³¹ Tilly outlines the predatory nature of early modern rulers who sought to pilfer the wealth and power of trust networks, including confraternities. Charles Tilly, *Trust and Rule* (Cambridge, UK: 2005), 88–95.

³² Tilly, *Trust and Rule*, 96.

³³ Bergin, *Church, Society, and Religious Change in France*, 340.

the subsequent decline in confraternities fits this progressive view of history well: the superstitious and inefficient give way to the rational and scientific; the disenchantment of the world results in modern secularisation. Much of 20th-century scholarship adopted the view that the modern rational and secular welfare system was born in the wake of the Reformation. W.K. Jordan wrote his influential *Philanthropy in England, 1480–1660* with the expressed goal to document “one of the few great cultural revolutions in western history: the momentous shift from men’s primarily religious preoccupations to the secular concerns that have moulded the thoughts and institutions of the past three centuries.”³⁴

A decade later, Brian Pullan directly challenged Jordan’s thesis with a ground-breaking study of medieval and early modern poor relief in a Catholic state.³⁵ In response Pullan argued that “No sharp contrast can fairly be drawn between indiscriminating, Church-dominated, ‘medieval’ charity (using the term ‘medieval’ to mean ‘before the 16th century’) and discriminate, lay-controlled, ‘early modern’ social policies [...] Many changes once supposedly located in the 16th century were anticipated, at least in theory and in principle, by earlier generations.”³⁶

Pullan’s monumental study, which examined early modern Venetian confraternities and hospitals, challenged the prevailing interpretation of history celebrating the Protestant origins of modernity and rational welfare relief.³⁷ Subsequent studies have confirmed Pullan’s general thesis so that now the history of charity in western Europe reflects a much more nuanced discourse that challenges scholars to rethink one of the dominant narratives of modernisation. This new historiographical approach has inspired works that examine charity and hospitals with a broad geographic or chronological scope.³⁸

Early modern European scholarship may no longer portray the Reformation as the harbinger of modern secular welfare, but the historiographical shift has not become standard in American scholarship. Formed in the wake of

34 W.K. Jordan, *Philanthropy in England, 1480–1660* (London: 1959), 16.

35 Brian Pullan, *Rich and Poor in Renaissance Venice: The Social Institutions of a Catholic State, to 1620* (Cambridge, MA: 1971).

36 Pullan, *Rich and Poor*, 198.

37 On Venetian confraternities see David D’Andrea, “Charity and Confraternities,” in *A Companion to Venetian History, 1400–1797*, (ed.) Eric Dursteler, (Leiden: 2013), 421–447.

38 *Health Care and Poor Relief in Protestant Europe*, (eds.) Ole Peter Grell and Andrew Cunningham (London: 1997); *Health Care and Poor Relief in Counter-Reformation Europe*, (eds.) Ole Peter Grell and Andrew Cunningham with Jon Arrizabalaga (London: 1999); *The Impact of Hospitals, 300–2000*, (eds.) John Henderson, Peregrine Horden, and Alessandro Pastore (Oxford: 2007).

European expansion, of the Reformation, and of early modern political revolutions, American institutions drew from competing historical lineages. Roger Lohmann, author of "Confraternities" for *Philanthropy in America: A Comprehensive Historical Encyclopedia*, struggles to reconcile the influence of medieval "Catholic membership associations" with American notions of freedom and the separation of church and state: "Confraternities, which were especially prominent in the social order of medieval Europe [...] are comparable in many respects to the American concept of voluntary associations. Participation in any association sanctioned by episcopal authority, ecclesiastical obligation, and divine sanction may hardly be designated 'voluntary' in the ordinary sense, however." The author's bibliography is revealing. He cites histories of Renaissance Florence, the work of Robert Putnam, and studies of Penitent Hispano-Catholic brotherhoods in New Mexico, but there is not one study of hospitals or charitable activities in early America.³⁹

Lohmann's division between medieval Catholic piety and American secular philanthropy is widely accepted in American historiography. An encyclopaedia of poverty in the United States describes American charity in traditional progressive language, emphasizing the evolution from religious benevolence to more efficient "business-like" charity grounded in English law.⁴⁰ Olivier Zunz's authoritative history of American philanthropy also refers to English welfare traditions and law, particularly the 1601 British Statute of Charitable Uses and the enumeration of acceptable gifts for poor relief, medical care, education, religion, and other works for the common good.⁴¹ American scholars recognise the early modern legacy, but their references to the 1601 English poor laws is uncritical, not acknowledging the historical context that produced the Elizabethan legislation or how the categories of acceptable charity were developed in opposition to Catholic alternatives.

Latin American scholarship, however, engages more readily with European scholarship. The "confraternities" entry in *Iberia and the Americas. Culture, Politics, and History* describes confraternities as "charitable corporate organisations run by the laity and organised around a specific Catholic devotion. They first appeared in Europe in the 13th century as organisations primarily concerned with fulfilling charitable acts [...] the impact of the confraternity system is felt throughout the region in devotional practices that echo both the

39 Roger Lohmann, "Confraternities," in *Philanthropy in America: A Comprehensive Historical Encyclopedia*, (ed.) Dwight Burlingame (Santa Barbara: 2004), 1:95–98.

40 Laura Tuennerman-Kaplan, "Charity," in *Poverty in the United States. An Encyclopedia of History, Politics, and Policy*, eds. Gwendolyn Mink and Alice O'Connor, (Santa Barbara: 2004), 1:139–143.

41 Olivier Zunz, *Philanthropy in America: A History* (Princeton: 2011), 12.

social organisation of the Euro-American confraternities and the syncretist practices in indigenous and Afro-Latin American organisations.”⁴² The author notes the transformation of medieval confraternities by a number of global influences and appreciates their complex historical legacy.

European settlement and colonisation, characterised by sharp Catholic and Protestant theological differences regarding good works, the poor, and religious organisations, fundamentally shaped the American welfare system. American scholars, however, appear to have some difficulty integrating the two charitable traditions, Ibero-American and Anglo-Saxon, into one historical discourse. The religious and charitable bifurcation of European settlement has led to a muddled historiographical discourse and incomplete historical understanding of American philanthropic development and traditions. This confusion is one example of the need for further research and study.

7 Further Research

From the initial investigation of medieval Italian religious brotherhoods to Jesuit confraternities in early modern Japan, confraternity studies have grown enormously in the last few decades. The field will undoubtedly develop in unexpected ways, but an overview of sources, methods, and recent research might offer useful guideposts for scholars.

Primary sources are the basis for any scholarship. Not surprisingly, Italy's vast archival and artistic patrimonies fundamentally shaped the topics and methodologies that influenced most subsequent work on confraternal associations: types and membership; control and sponsorship; organisation and religious life; external devotions; finances; categories of deserving poor; buildings and decoration; and good works.⁴³ Archival material includes confraternity statutes, episcopal visitation records, confraternity ledgers, minute books, and membership lists. Written records reveal the political role of the confraternity in the community, financial administration and economic activities, and demographic data of both the members and those whom they served: socio-economic status, gender, religious and ethnic identities. Scholars have also recently broadened the demographic and religious boundaries to include

42 Elizabeth Kiddy, “Confraternities,” in *Iberia and the Americas. Culture, Politics, and History. A Multidisciplinary Encyclopedia*, (ed.) J. Michael Francis (Santa Barbara: 2006), 1:316–317.

43 On the breadth and depth of Italian confraternal life and activities see Christopher Black, *Italian Confraternities in the Sixteenth Century* (Cambridge: 1989), especially the section “Hospices, housing and hospitals,” 184–200.

non-Catholic religious confraternities, notably early modern Muslim and Jewish religious brotherhoods.⁴⁴

Confraternity scholarship is increasingly interdisciplinary. A number of recent studies have examined the visual and architectural patrimony of confraternities: processional banners, artwork, chapels, meeting houses, hospitals, orphanages, and a wide array of material objects. Taking the lead from Italian medievalists, European scholars have produced an enormous quantity of individual case studies of confraternities and hospitals in pre-Reformation Europe. After the Reformation, the study of religious brotherhoods and charitable activities becomes segmented, mainly due, of course, to the suppression of confraternities and the loss of primary sources in Protestant areas.

The surviving archival sources have structured the geography of confraternity studies, with an obvious concentration on areas with traditional or continuous Catholic cultures and institutions, but the field is far from exhausted.⁴⁵ Even within the well-developed Italian historiography there is much work to be done beyond the intensely-studied northern Italian city-states; southern Italy lacks a wide geographic and chronological range of local studies. In Italy and elsewhere most of the rural and smaller confraternities still need further study. Recent confraternal research seeks to transcend national histories, placing local histories into regional and global contexts. Scholars have only begun to explore the medieval and early modern connections between Spain and Italy, which were united politically for much of the early modern period.⁴⁶ The role of charitable confraternities throughout the Mediterranean World and the relationships between European confraternities and brotherhoods in America and Asia also need further study.

Confraternity studies also have chronological strengths and weaknesses. Confraternities are typically studied in three separate phases: their origins in medieval Europe; the impact of the Renaissance and Reformation on poor laws and charitable institutions; and the modern historiographical paradigms that inform and structure studies of contemporary poverty and philanthropy. The history of charity, however, defies stark chronological divisions, and scholars are increasingly aware of the need to transcend traditional historical

44 See the essays in "Part IV: Kinship and the Politics of Devotion in Islam and Judaism," in *Faith's Boundaries: Laity and Clergy in Early Modern Confraternities*, (eds.) Nicholas Terpstra, Adriano Prosperi, and Stefania Pastore (Turnhout: 2012).

45 For a recent discussion of the need for more studies and new methodological approaches see Marina Gazzini, (ed.) *Studi Confraternali: Orientamenti, Problemi, Testimonianze*, Reti Medievali E-Book, 12 (Florence: 2009).

46 Salvatore Marino, "Late Medieval Hospitals in Southern Italy. Civic Patronage, and Social Identity," *Mediterranean Chronicle* 5 (2015): 141–159.

specialisations and periodisation.⁴⁷ As one scholar frustratingly summarised the inadequacy: "Studies of social policy in the early modern period tend to peter out in the 17th or 18th centuries, and those covering the 19th and 20th centuries are often written without much awareness of what lay before."⁴⁸

The lack of long-term chronological analysis and historical development is found across subfields and specialisations. A scholar of colonial Mexico observes that "Confraternities were among the first social institutions set up in the New World. While historians have attached much significance to 18th-century confraternities, the earlier colonial period has been understudied."⁴⁹ A recent survey of American institutions notes that lay confraternities "represent one of the most interesting and least studied modern survivals of medieval Christendom within the organisational network of the contemporary Roman Catholic Church."⁵⁰ The studies and tools to place modern welfare systems in historical context, particularly in American historiography, are still inadequate. As a growing chorus of scholars calls for more studies to understand how medieval institutions influenced the modern welfare system, confraternity studies will be increasingly important to this investigation.

Suggestions for more geographic and diachronic studies should also examine the historiographical questions and methodologies that account for the current state of the scholarship and lacunae. Scholars have tended to divide confraternity studies into two historiographical tendencies: an ecclesiastical approach emphasizing religious devotion and a socio-anthropological approach analysing the social-political context.⁵¹ Confraternities were religiously-inspired organisations, so the initial scholarship by medievalists naturally focused on their religious activities and role. As the field developed into early modern history, the role of confraternities divided along confessional lines: continuity in Catholic charity or Protestant secularisation of philanthropy. As Brodman and others have concluded: "the old distinction between Catholic and Protestant charity is not a useful or accurate tool for the analysis of late medieval and early modern relief."⁵² A more useful methodological

47 Sigrun Kahl, "The Religious Roots of Modern Poverty Policy: Catholic, Lutheran, and Reformed Protestant Traditions Compared," *European Journal of Sociology* 46 (2005): 91–126.

48 *Charity, Philanthropy and Reform: From the 1690s to 1850*, (eds.) Hugh Cunningham and Joanna Innes (New York: 1998), 1.

49 Laura Dierksmeier, "From Isolation to Inclusion," 69.

50 Lohmann, "Confraternities," 96.

51 For a succinct summary of the methodological approaches see the introduction to John Henderson, *Piety and Charity in Late Medieval Florence* (Oxford: 1994).

52 Brodman, *Charity and Welfare*, 142.

approach is needed to understand confraternities and their complicated historical legacies.

Scholars have turned to the socio-anthropological approach as one way to break out of the religious/secular dichotomy. Economic data, poor rates, inflation, standards of living, and demographic information can be analysed with little or no reference to moral or religious principles. Anthropological approaches emphasizing universal aspects of confraternal life have opened up new areas of analysis. Concepts of ritual brotherhood and political engagement have been used by a number of disciplines, most notably political science, and applied to a wide variety of groups and historical eras. Scholars have begun to analyse similarly-organised civic groups, such as social and political clubs, in modern liberal democracies.⁵³ This latest historiographical development has the advantage of pulling together subjects that have traditionally been studied in isolation: Catholic charity, Protestant philanthropy, Mediterranean culture, and Anglo-American political traditions.

Early modern religious scholars recognise the limitation of religion as a heuristic device but also demonstrate an ambivalence toward the socio-anthropological approach. One leading scholar of confraternity studies, Nicholas Terpstra, asks "Can a recognition of confraternities as a *cultural form* and *social resource* help us avoid the analytical conundrum that John Bossy speaks of, that is, our tendency to distinguish religion from society, and then to spend enormous energy determining how these distinct spheres relate?"⁵⁴ Another leading scholar, Brian Pullan, argues the theological differences are fundamental to our understanding of confraternities and charity. Although Catholics and Protestants imposed similar legislation regarding the poor, different theological interpretations fostered very different institutions to support those deemed needy.⁵⁵ Pullan notes that Catholics continued to support foundling homes, but hospices for illegitimate abandoned children disappeared from Protestant territories. According to this school of thought, generic social science rubrics relegate charitable activities to a political or social

53 See Robert Putnam with Robert Leonardi and Raffaella Nanetti, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (Princeton, NJ: 1993) and Dylan Reid, "Measuring the Impact of Brotherhood: The Implications of Robert Putnam's *Making Democracy Work* for Confraternal Studies," *Confraternitas* 14.1 (2003): 3–13.

54 Nicholas Terpstra, "Confraternities and the Modes of Spiritual Community in Early Modern Europe," in *Early Modern Catholicism. Essays in Honour of John W. O'Malley, S.J.*, (eds.) Kathleen M. Comerford and Hilmar M. Pabel (Toronto: 2001), 163–182, quotation 177. My italics.

55 Brian Pullan, "Catholics, Protestants, and the Poor in Early Modern Europe," *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* (2005): 441–456.

function and undervalue religious motivation. Discussing confraternities as just another “cultural form” or “social resource” hampers rather than elucidates our understanding of their historical role and legacy.

8 Concluding Thoughts: The Religious Legacy of Confraternities

One of the goals of this volume is to make manifest the invisible history of medieval and early modern confraternities. Scholars are, in fact, increasingly recognizing the importance of confraternal associations, the religious principles that inspired them, and their legacy to the modern world. The discovery and re-evaluation of confraternities is part of a post-confessional and post-secular paradigm shift. In 2003 Thomas Safley called for “A Reformation of Charity,” arguing that 19th-century historical and sociological models under which much of modern scholarship labours are inadequate to understand the historical reality. He encouraged scholars to pose new questions and conceptions that acknowledge how “early modern charity retained its sacred character and religious signification, regardless of secularisation and rationalisation.”⁵⁶ A recent article by Sigrun Kahl echoes Safley in saying that the “loss of secular power by the church does not equal loss of spiritual power [...] it does not mean that secular principles of welfare state provision are not now rooted in Christian postulates.”⁵⁷ Freed from confessional histories and theories of secularisation scholars are pursuing a *via media*, an intermediate approach that accepts both the religious tradition of charity and the increased secular and lay administration of welfare.

Confraternities have emerged as central actors in the history of the West and confraternity studies has become much more than a parochial field of inquiry. Scholars will continue to study the historical development of confraternities and formulate paradigms to assess their complicated legacy. In *The Unintended Reformation* Brad Gregory observed “that the Western world today is an extraordinarily complex, tangled product of rejections, retentions, and transformations of medieval Western Christianity, in which the Reformation era constitutes the critical watershed.”⁵⁸ Christian ideals of community and charity built the charitable infrastructure of the Middle Ages in which confraternities had a leading role. Early modern debates about the poor and their

56 See Thomas Safley’s introduction to his edited book *The Reformation of Charity: The Secular and Sacred in Early Modern Poor Relief* (Leiden: 2003), quotation 194.

57 Sigrun Kahl, “The Religious Roots of Modern Poverty Policy,” 122–123.

58 Gregory, *The Unintended Reformation*, 2.

care led to the rejection, retention, or transformation of confraternities and their charitable activities. Our modern welfare programs and philanthropic organisations are the legacy of these early modern religious debates. The more we study and understand medieval and early modern charitable confraternities, the more we will understand our own communities.

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Confraternities in Late Medieval Ireland: The Evolution of Chantry Colleges

Colm Lennon

1 Introduction

As elsewhere in late medieval Europe, religious confraternities of men and women flourished in most parts of Ireland. In the western and northern regions where Gaelic culture was in the ascendant, a distinctive kind of lay religious kinship evolved, characterised principally by affiliation through tertiary organisations to the religious orders, such as the Franciscans.¹ In the areas under English influence, by contrast, lay confraternality followed patterns established in much of Britain and the European continent. People joined pious associations within their parishes for many reasons including the promoting of charity and the fostering of good social relations, but, above all, for the assuring of their own spiritual well-being. Many of these bodies were small and informal, with loose ties to local parish churches. By the 15th century in the principal centres of the Englishry, however, there developed large and comparatively wealthy institutions, which became central to the ecclesiastical and corporate life of the parishes. Commonly dubbed confraternities or guilds, some of these substantial associations became collegiate, as they had coteries of chaplains living communally in purpose-built accommodation, who served chantry altars in chapels or aisles of parish churches. Not to be confused with canonically-created colleges of priests or vicars choral,² the chantry colleges (as they later came to be known) were normally established by royal charter and they continued in existence even after the coming of the Reformation to Ireland in the mid-16th century.

Through a study of selected religious associations in the English Pale (the four anglicised eastern counties of Dublin, Kildare, Louth, and Meath), this

¹ See Colm Lennon, "The Confraternities and Cultural Duality in Ireland, 1450–1550" in *Early modern confraternities in Europe and the Americas: international and interdisciplinary perspectives*, (eds.) Christopher Black and Pamela Gravestock (London: 2006), 35–52.

² There is as yet no thorough study of collegiate churches in Ireland, but for a fairly comprehensive list see Aubrey Gwynn and R.N. Hadcock, *Medieval Religious Houses in Ireland* (Dublin: 1970), 358–362.

article examines the process whereby late medieval confraternities evolved from individual intercessory foundations into spiritual collectives of laywomen and men in parish churches.³ The rootedness of these confraternities in the cantuarial system will shed some light on the fairly neglected topic in Irish historiography of the endowment of chantry foundations and their lay and clerical supervision. A strong chaplaincy presence in the institutions under review draws attention to patterns of patronage and the role of stipendiary priests in conveying property from the secular to the ecclesiastical sphere. Charters of incorporation of the selected confraternities will be shown to have laid the foundations for a vigorous collegiate identity not only as foci of devotion for lay people but also as centres of communal living for the clerics. For the parishes where the chantry colleges were located, a milieu of lay spiritual fervour animated the negotiating of relations between guild leaders and diocesan and parochial authorities. In the civic sphere, the foundation by gentry families of confraternity colleges in their manorial churches spoke to their sense of colonial pride in the late medieval lordship of Ireland, while the integration of confraternity and parish governance in municipal administration helped to bolster urban political autonomy. At the time of the Reformation many chantry colleges were so well embedded in the social, economic, and religious life of the parishes as to be able to withstand a weak and disjointed government campaign of religious change that neglected to abolish obituarial institutions.⁴

2 Origins and Endowment of Chantries in Eastern Ireland

Across the region in the late Middle Ages, charitable donation of varying value and nature, including lands, money, and artefacts, was a ubiquitous feature of parochial life. Much of this beneficence was directed towards chantry foundations, whereby specially appointed priests interceded through prayer and liturgy for the salvation of the souls of donors and their families at votive altars

3 These are: Ardee (St Mary's) and Drogheda (St Peter's) in County Louth, and Dublin city (St Audoen's). The manorial churches of Killeen and Slane in County Meath will also be referred to in the context of collegiate foundation in more rural parishes.

4 There were up to a dozen other large religious corporations in the English Pale that had at least three votive altars and active memberships: these included Athboy, County Meath (St James's), Dublin city, (St Sythe's), Dundalk, County Louth (St Nicholas's), Mulhuddard, County Dublin (St Mary's), Naas, County Kildare (Holy Trinity) and Termonfeckin, County Louth (St Feighin). Evidence is lacking in all cases, however, for collegiate accommodation, and, in many, for details of confraternal activity, but aspects of their history will be adduced to provide a much-needed context for Irish confraternities.

either in aisles or designated chapels of parish churches.⁵ In the century preceding their incorporation as confraternities in the 1430s and 1440s, the collegiate parish churches of Ardee, Drogheda, and Dublin had become the loci of several individual obituarial commemorations. In St Mary's, Ardee, separate licences were granted in 1382 to John Keppock and Margaret Trym for creating landed trusts for three chantry chaplains, and a royal patent of 1391 licensed the granting of eleven and a half acres for a perpetual chantry in the church.⁶ In 1335, Richard Tanner left money in his will for masses for his soul to be celebrated by a chaplain in the parish church of St Peter's, Drogheda, while a chapel and altars dedicated to the Blessed Virgin, St John, St Anne, and St Martin were in existence before 1436, the year of incorporation of the chantry college.⁷ Nicholas Byssshop's donation of property in 1348, worth £20 annually, to a chaplain of St Audoen's parish, Dublin, for the commemoration of his soul and that of his wife, Joan, was one of several gifts that facilitated cantuarial celebration under dedication to the Blessed Virgin, St Anne, and other venerable patrons in the 14th century.⁸ Throughout the Pale, there were important parishes with a similar multiplicity of chantries and altars, such as Kells, Ratoath, and Trim in County Meath, but in these cases complexity of structure in terms of aisles or chantry chapels does not correlate to collegiate confraternal status in the 15th century.⁹

All cantuarial devotion, whether individual and confraternal, was underwritten by donations of real property, ranging from small to substantial,

5 For the institution in late medieval Britain, see Alan Kreider, *English Chantries: The Road to Dissolution* (Harvard: 1979), but the evidence for Irish bodies has scarcely been collated. The chantry colleges in Ardee, Drogheda and Dublin can be documented mainly through diocesan and parish registers and histories, wills, state papers, and rolls. In the case of St Anne's guild in St Audoen's, Dublin, a unique collection of several hundred manuscripts, including deeds, accounts, and minutes, is preserved in the Royal Irish Academy, Dublin.

6 *A Calendar of Irish Chancery Letters, c.1244–1509*, (ed.) Peter Crooks [hereafter CIRCLE], Patent Roll, 5 Richard II, no. 13, Close Roll, no. 76; [online at <https://chancery.tcd.ie/document/patent/5-richard-ii/13>; document/close/5-richard-ii/76 (accessed 29 July 2017)]; *Calendar of Patent Rolls, Richard II (1388–92)*, (London: 1902), 419.

7 Dowdall Deeds, (eds.) Charles McNeill and A.J. Otway-Ruthven (Dublin: 1960), 53; *The Register of Milo Sweteman, Archbishop of Armagh, 1361–1380*, (ed.) Brendan Smith (Dublin: 1996), no. 178; *The Register of John Swayne, Archbishop of Armagh, 1418–39*, (ed.) D.A. Chart (Belfast: 1935), 178–180; John Bradley, *Drogheda: Its Topography and Medieval Layout* (Drogheda: 1997), 18.

8 Dublin, Royal Irish Academy, MS12 S 24 (1), Edward III/3; Henry F. Berry, "History of the Religious Guild of St Anne in St Audoen's Church, Dublin, 1430–1740," *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, 25 (1904–05): 21–106.

9 For a discussion of these religious associations, see Colm Lennon, "The Parish Fraternities of County Meath," *Ríocht na Midhe*, 19 (2008): 85–101.

towards the payment of the chaplains' stipends and the maintenance of the fabric of an altar or chapel. Whereas in the century and a half after the settlement of Anglo-Normans in the region in 1170 monasteries had been the primary beneficiaries of lay endowment of the church, there was a marked tendency thereafter towards the vesting of estates, farms, and houses in the diocesan or parochial church, mainly through the financing of the chantry and confraternal system.¹⁰ The three parish churches under scrutiny had particular claims to lay beneficence: St Audoen's, Dublin, as well as being the most fashionable place of worship for the civic elite, was predendal of the metropolitan cathedral, St Patrick's; St Peter's, Drogheda, which had been appropriated to the priory of Llanthony, became a pro-cathedral for the archdiocese of Armagh, the archbishops lavishing it with special patronage as the southern headquarters of their primatial administration; and Ardee, also in Armagh diocese, enjoyed relative freedom from that control, the lords of the manor, who appointed the vicar of the parish, being emulated in their generosity towards the parish by their fellow-landowners. Patrimonies, comprising bequests and grants on long or short leases set aside for the income for one or more intercessory chantry chaplains, came to represent large and readily identifiable property portfolios within the parishes. That these had indeed well-worn designations is attested by continuing references in official or common parlance to chantry lands in the 17th century and beyond, as, for example, in the commission of inquiry of Charles I in 1627 into the "chauntry lands" of St George's and St Katherine's, Ardee, and of St Peter's and St Mary's, Drogheda (which by that time consisted of 300 separate farms and houses, spread over thousands of acres).¹¹ In the 1690s it was reckoned by plaintiffs in a case opposing the continuation of St Anne's confraternity, Dublin, that the estate in city and county, comprising up to fifty separate parcels, was earning annual rental income of £3,000 (almost fifty times the sum of 100 marks [£66 13s 4d] permitted by the 1430 charter).¹²

It seems clear, then, that the separate endowments in these particular parish churches were carefully consolidated within confraternal economies by the time of incorporation in the 1430s and 1440s. In the case of Ardee from the late 14th century, a succession of capable and ambitious vicars (presented by the

10 Adrian Empey, "The Layperson in the Parish: The Medieval Inheritance, 1169–1536," in *The Laity and the Church of Ireland, 1000–2000*, (eds.) Raymond Gillespie and W.G. Neely (Dublin: 2002), 17: the orders of friars attracted widespread donation throughout Ireland in the late Middle Ages.

11 *Irish Patent Rolls of James I*, (ed.) M. Griffith (Dublin: 1966), 404–405; *Calendar of the Patent and Close Rolls of Chancery in Ireland*, (ed.) James Morrin (Dublin: 1863), iii, 261–263.

12 *A Farther Consideration of the State of the Case of St Ann's Guild Within the Church of St Audoen's, Dublin* (Dublin, 1703), 1.

manorial lords) oversaw a series of lucrative donations from major gentry families in the hinterland of the town, including the Taillours, Faunts, and St Legers, forging estates for the parish chantries. This they accomplished by litigating vigorously in the secular and ecclesiastical courts to defend the cantuarial interests in the face of claims of rival landowners.¹³ The archbishops of Armagh and the patriciate of Drogheda were generous benefactors of the buildings and estate of St Peter's parish and chantries in the 15th and early 16th centuries.¹⁴ St Anne's confraternity in Dublin preserved hundreds of property deeds relating to the premises that came to form that body's impressive endowment, many of them dating back to the 14th century.¹⁵ These trace the history of the properties from initial acquisition from pious individuals to full absorption within the confraternal landholding system. To cite a couple of examples, a premises in Cook Street, close to St Audoen's, had passed down through leases at various hands (including those of chaplains) since 1350, through to John Stafford, a baker and founding member of St Anne's confraternity, in the early 15th century, whose widow, Joan, transferred this parcel and many of his bequests to the confraternity on condition that the chaplains would celebrate mass in his memory in perpetuity,¹⁶ while shops near the church were transmitted through three generations of the Douce and Decer civic families to chaplains of St Audoen's for the good of their souls.¹⁷

3 Religious and Legal Role of Chaplains in the Evolution of Chantry Colleges

Frequent reference has been made to chaplains, those unbeneficed clerics who were at the heart of the chantry and confraternal system that reached maturity in the 15th century. Growing more numerous as the 14th century progressed, chaplains were ubiquitous throughout the church *inter Anglicos* by the end of the Middle Ages, Ardee being served by up to sixty between 1370 and 1518, and

13 Laurence Murray, "The Ancient Chantries of County Louth," *Journal of the County Louth Archaeological Society* 9 (1939): 181–208.

14 Henry Jefferies, *Priests and Prelates of Armagh in the Age of Reformations, 1518–1558* (Dublin: 1997), 24–25; *Registrum Octaviani: The Register of Octavian de Palatio, 1478–1513*, (ed.) Mario Sughì (Dublin: 1999), ii, 370–371, 766–767.

15 Dublin, Royal Irish Academy, MSS 12 S 22–31: the deeds are currently being digitized and re-numbered.

16 Berry, "Religious Guild of St Anne," 55, 65, 72–73, 80–81.

17 Dublin, Royal Irish Academy, 12 S 23 (9), Edward 11/16; 12 S 24 (23), Edward 111/48; 12 S 26 (23), Richard 11/11; 12 S 28 (18), Edward 1/25.

St Peter's, Drogheda, having twelve in liturgical procession in 1542.¹⁸ Chosen by parishioners there as priests "distinguished by outstanding morality of life,"¹⁹ the chaplains' primary function was to celebrate mass in memory of their patrons, whether in perpetuity or for limited periods, drawing stipends of, on average, £5 to £6 per annum from the endowments. Sometimes designated by their altar's dedication, such as "the Mary priest," the chantry chaplains also had a role to play outside of the confines of the parochial buildings, sometimes by implication in a parish school.²⁰ Being bound up with their landed or mercantile benefactors, and indeed often related to them by blood, they regularly carried out secular transactions on their behalf. They were frequently nominated as attorneys in the delivery of possession of lands, as in St Audoen's on a number of occasions,²¹ and also engaged actively in the civil and church courts as witnesses and jurors in inquisitions and legal cases, occasionally as landowners, as in the case of Chaplain Walter Verdon of Ardee.²² Above all, however, it was through their crucial role in the conveyancing of property for cantuarial purposes that the chaplains became linchpins of the economic and cultural order revolving around the late medieval parish confraternities.

This centrality in legal matters no less than in intercessory worship arose out of the negotiating of the late medieval mortmain legislation by lay founders of chantries and confraternities. Endowment of monasteries or diocesan churches in Britain and Ireland was forbidden from 1279 onwards under the statute of mortmain (1279), unless a special royal licence of exemption were sought and granted. In 1391, this restriction on conveying land into church ownership was extended to cover the endowment of corporate bodies, including religious confraternities and guilds.²³ A variety of responses was elicited among patrons, including the official suing out of licences for endowments to support chantry priests in parish churches, royal castles, monasteries, cathedrals, and hospitals.²⁴ There are comparatively few official licences extant

18 Murray, "Ancient Chantries," 185; Jefferies, *Priests and Prelates*, 24.

19 *Register of Octavian*, ii, 432.

20 For intimations of an educational role generally see James Murray, *Enforcing the English Reformation in Ireland: Clerical Resistance and Political Conflict in the Diocese of Dublin, 1534–1590* (Cambridge: 2009), 78; for hints thereof in the specific case of St Audoen's, Dublin, see Berry, "Religious Guild of St Anne," 33, 49.

21 For examples in Dublin, see Dublin, Royal Irish Academy, 12 S 28 (4) Edward 111/70; 12 S 28 (49), Richard 11/26.

22 Murray, "Ancient chantries," 201–204.

23 Paul Brand, "The Licensing of Mortmain Alienations in the Medieval Lordship of Ireland," *Irish Jurist*, 21 (1986): 125–144.

24 Among the dozen licences granted for chantries as listed in the calendars of patent rolls for the 14th century, see *Calendar of Patent Rolls, Edward 111 (1370–4)*, (London: 1914), 337–338, in relation to a chantry of five priests at Holywood, County Dublin in 1373.

for the founding of individual parish chantries or parish confraternities down to the 15th century, but among those that were granted was the 1391 patent establishing a perpetual chantry in St Mary's, Ardee.²⁵ This could have been a response to the recent legislation, the consequences of the ignoring of which were felt by the founder of a confraternity in St Michael's, Dublin, whose property illegally bequeathed thereto was confiscated in 1395.²⁶ There were also separate licences granted in 1381, 1382 and 1403 to prominent Ardee land-owners, John Keppock, Margaret Trym and Thomas Faunt, for the conveying through either enfeoffment and straight donation of acres to groups of chaplains.²⁷ It is possible that many records for licensing have been lost, as there are later references to bodies having been legally founded as perpetual chantries, but no such records have come to light for the confraternities of St Anne in St Peter's, Drogheda, and St Audoen's, Dublin, before the 1430s.²⁸

In view of the large number of known endowments and the comparative paucity of royal licences, the strong suggestion is that most of the chantry foundations were unofficial, perhaps effected either through short-term leasing, or simple disregard of mortmain legislation.²⁹ For example, the elaborate arrangements of Magina Asshwell of Drogheda in her will of 1464 involved temporary enfeoffment of trustees who would ensure the celebration of masses for her soul at one of the altars in St Peter's for fifty-nine years.³⁰ Many of the major land grants by gentry families to the chantry system in Ardee ended up being litigated in the courts,³¹ but in the case of St Audoen's, Dublin, a huge

25 *Calendar of Patent Rolls, Richard II* (1388–92), (London: 1902), 419.

26 CIRCLE, PR, 18 Richard II, no. 50; [<https://chancery.tcd.ie/document/patent/18-richard-ii/50>; (accessed 29 July 2017)]; Paul Brand, "King, Church and Property: The Enforcement of Restrictions on Alienations into Mortmain in the Lordship of Ireland in the Late Middle Ages," *Peritia*, 3 (1984): 481–502; in 1416 the crown confirmed the foundation of a chantry at Athboy, County Meath, which had been established before the statute of mortmain: CIRCLE, PR, 3 Hen. v, no. 98 [<https://chancery.tcd.ie/document/patent/3-henry-v/98> (accessed 29 July 2017)].

27 CIRCLE, PR, 5 Rich. II, no. 13, CR, no. 76; PR, 4 Hen. IV, no. 250 [<https://chancery.tcd.ie/document/patent/5-richard-ii/13>; document/close/5-richard-ii/76; document/patent/4-henry-iv/250 (accessed 29 July 2017)].

28 Brand, "Licensing of Mortmain Alienations," 140–144; for another example of a later confraternity that seemed to have been preceded by a perpetual chantry, see the evidence for St Sythe's, in St Michan's, Dublin: Colm Lennon, "The Foundation Charter of St Sythe's Guild, Dublin, 1476," *Archivium Hibernicum*, 48 (1994): 3.

29 Brand, "King, Church and Property," 483; for the situation in England, see Kreider, *English Chantries*, 77–80; Sandra Raban, *Mortmain Legislation and the English Church, 1279–1500* (Cambridge: 1982), 91–92, 127.

30 *Register of Octavian*, II, 645–647.

31 Murray, "Ancient Chantries," 187–188; 192–197.

number of minor grants by citizens went under the radar of the courts of chancery. This is in all likelihood due to the systematic employment of trusteeships or "enfeoffment to use," involving donors, feoffees and chaplains, whereby landowners drew up deeds of trust, enfeoffing nominees with the estates. These arranged for the enjoyment of the profits by chaplains, without transfer to the church of beneficial ownership (which under chancery law remained with the original lords). Among these numerous deeds for the conveying of stipends to chaplains, probably designed to circumvent the mortmain statutes, were the grant in 1359 by Adam Alisaundre of a stone house in Newgate to a panel of eleven men, including chaplains, presumably as trustees to ensure religious use, the transfer in 1392 of a shop in High Street by Alice Gallane to a consortium of six chaplains, and the conveying in 1372 by Richard de Carleton, a chaplain, and himself the recipient of the donation, of a tenement in Cook Street to three fellow-chaplains.³²

The incorporation of major confraternities as chantry colleges in St Peter's, Drogheda, St Mary's, Ardee and St Audoen's, Dublin in the 1430s was a result of a confluence of factors. The inflation of cantuarial provision, in terms of numbers of altars and chaplains, was compounded by the variety of the legal arrangements, or lack of them, whereby the endowments were accumulated. There were licences for a perpetual chantry as in Ardee, limited term obituarial commemorations as in Drogheda, and widespread donations that seemingly evaded the mortmain legislation as in the case of St Audoen's in the capital. Crown application of the law against alienation of estates to the church in the early decades of the 15th century coincided with a drive on the part of the parishioners to consolidate the endowed resources of the chantries and to seek corporate status for their institutions.³³ All of these successful pre-Reformation bodies had a notable record of attracting beneficence from townsfolk and gentry, and they operated in a benign ecclesiastical milieu. Chaplains who performed the rituals of remembrance for the souls of the deceased and who took on additional extra-ecclesial responsibilities in their parish communities, most notably in effecting enfeoffments to use or legal trusts, benefited by the stabilised conditions created by charters of incorporation of their chantries and helped to cement strong partnerships between church and society on the eve of the Reformation.

32 Dublin, Royal Irish Academy, 12 S 31 (56), Edward 111/52; 12 S 23 (2), Edward 111/41, 12 S 24 (7), Edward 111/66; Berry, "St Anne's Guild," 66, 80; for a discussion of endowment of religious confraternities in the context of lay management of parish estates, see Empey, "Layperson in the Parish," 36–41.

33 Brand, "King, Church and Property," 486–487.

4 From Chantries to Confraternities: Foundation Charters

With the support of the chief governors of the lordship, royal foundation documents for confraternities or religious guilds were issued to the three parishes of St Audoen's, Dublin (1430), St Peter's, Drogheda (1436) and St Mary's, Ardee (1446 or 1447), at the request of coteries of citizens, burgesses and gentry.³⁴ In each case the stated motive was the honour of God, as well as of saintly or divine dedicatees of the altars, including Holy Cross in Ardee, and St Anne in Dublin and Drogheda (in both of which churches aisles under her patronage were erected). Under the rule of a master and two wardens, the new bodies were granted full corporate powers, including the use of a common seal, and the pursuance of suits at law. The master and wardens were expected to consult the brothers and sisters for the good governance of the guilds, and arrange for the perpetual succession of officers. Integral to the foundation process was the establishment of a chantry of a number of chaplains to celebrate mass daily in the chapels or at designated altars for the repose of the souls of all who were party to the foundation, including the king. To sustain the chaplains the confraternities were permitted to purchase or acquire lands and property yielding amounts of £29, £40 and £66 13s 4d per annum in the respective instances of Drogheda, Ardee, and Dublin, these endowments to be exempted from the statute of mortmain. Only in the case of Drogheda is there reference to the performance of "other works of piety" and "work of charity."

On the face of it, much of what was being licensed in these new confraternities was already present in some form in the parish churches under review. The desire for legalisation of pre-existing chantry activity and endowments may have been a powerful incentive in these communities. In 1435, for example, the newly-incorporated guild of St Anne, Dublin, received a grant from Chaplain Alexander Hunter of five properties in the city worth £8 7s per annum "in part satisfaction" of the permitted 100 marks mortmain exemption, even though these had been previously part of the parish chantry endowment since the 14th century.³⁵ Those petitioning for the foundation of confraternities include the names of many whose families had been for long involved in parish institutions, and those who may have had a particular interest in their being vested with greater powers. The archbishops of Dublin and Armagh headed

34 For versions of the foundation charters, see Berry, "St Anne's Guild," 22–23 (for St Audoen's), *Register of Archbishop Swayne*, 178–180 (for St Peter's), and Murray, "Ancient Chantries," 206–207 (for Ardee).

35 CIRCLE, PR, 13 Hen. vi, no. 76 [<https://chancery.tcd.ie/document/patent/13-henry-vi/76> (accessed 29 July 2017)]; Berry, "St Anne's Guild," 75.

the lists in respect of the parishes St Audoen's and St Peter's, Drogheda, whose churches were to be enhanced by the status of collegiate chantry. The founding confreres of each of the confraternities included a couple of clerics who represented continuity in intercessory worship. In Dublin and Drogheda, the founding members also included gentlemen such as Sir Thomas Cusack, who straddled the worlds of the landed elite and the civic patriciate, as well as merchants and artisans. In Ardee parish church, which had benefited substantially from the granting of estates by members of the gentry, the founders of the new confraternity of Holy Cross, St George and St Katherine included two of the most munificent donors, John St Leger and Thomas Sueterby, as well as the wily Walter Verdon, a chaplain, who safeguarded at law their lucrative trusts for ecclesiastical purposes in the face of contending lay claimants.

5 Devotional Practices of the Chantry Colleges

Although there were no explicit references in the licences to "the increase of divine service" or "the zeal of pious devotion" as occur in other confraternity charters, there can be no doubt that spiritual fervour moved the founders of the chantry colleges.³⁶ Essential to their obituarial purpose was the daily celebration of the Eucharist by chaplains in the larger spaces that confraternity resources could afford. Thus, in St Audoen's and St Peter's, new aisles dedicated to St Anne were constructed at the time of incorporation, with a second aisle to the south of the nave of the latter being built in 1525.³⁷ At the time of their pre-Reformation flourishing, the number of chapels with attendant chaplains had increased: Ardee contained five, St Audoen's six and St Peter's up to a dozen, the twelve chantry chaplains recorded as taking part in a solemn procession in the church in 1542. The dedication of both Dublin and Drogheda confraternities to St Anne reflected the contemporary popularity of the cult of the mother of the Virgin Mary, while Holy Cross, the honorific name of Ardee college, was also venerated at an altar in St Peter's. The Blessed Virgin and St Katherine figured as patrons of altars in all three churches, but the only native saint to be honoured by a chapel in his name was St Patrick, in Drogheda.

36 For example, the foundation statute of the English merchants' confraternity of the Blessed Virgin in the chapel at Bridge End, Dublin, in 1481 makes specific reference to "the increase of the glorification and praise of the glorious mother and Virgin Mary": *Statute Rolls of the Parliament of Edward IV*, (ed.) James Morrissey, ii (Dublin: 1939), 768–785.

37 The chapel of St Anne in St Audoen's, where Richard Codde requested to be buried, was built by 1438 (Berry, "St Anne's Guild," 49); that in St Peter's was "newly-built" in 1436 (*Register of Archbishop Swayne*, 178); Bradley, *Drogheda*, 19.

The confraternity chaplains added to the dignity of parish worship, being expected to assist the parish incumbent in serving in the choir before the high altar of the main church on Sundays and holydays, but their primary function was to commemorate the deceased members at masses in the votive chapels.³⁸

One of the prime perquisites of religious guild membership was burial before the favoured chantry altar. Thus, Richard Codde, a baker, in his will of 1438 asked that he be interred "beneath the ground sill of the chapel of St Anne in St Audoen's church"; in 1512 it was the wish of Patrick Fleming to be laid to rest in the chapel of St Martin below the parish church of St Peter; and in 1446 John Duff of Ardee left a series of sums of money for his funeral before burial in St Mary's, Ardee, to cover bread, ale, meat, candles, wax and fees for bell-ringing.³⁹ In 1533 Alexander Beswick requested that bread valued at eight marks be distributed to the poor at the time of his burial in St Clare's chapel in St Audoen's, and he further willed that a perpetual obit be established there to the memory of his wife and himself.⁴⁰ In the same church, Sir Robert Dowdall left the sum of 100 marks in 1478 to be invested at interest to pay for two priests to sing and pray in St Anne's chapel on his mind day (anniversary) for ever, thus adding to the complement of the clergy of St Audoen's.⁴¹ Of the special pieties of the guild members few physical vestiges remain, but there are signs of hallowed objects being connected to the confraternities. In Drogheda and Ardee, in both of which there was a flourishing devotion to the Holy Cross, great decorated crosses were erected, that in St Peter's parish by the gift of John Ballard in 1501, and that in St Mary's, bearing representations of the crucifixion and the Madonna, about the same time.⁴² And a large fresco painting of the Holy Trinity and possibly the figures of St Anne and Mary, the remains of which were discovered during restoration work in a recess of St Anne's chapel in St Audoen's in 1887, had probably been a focal point of the devotional life of the guild there.⁴³

38 Myles Ronan, "Religious Customs of Dublin Medieval Guilds," *Irish Ecclesiastical Record*, 26 (1925): 364–385.

39 Berry, "St Anne's Guild," 48–50; *Register of Octavian*, ii, 766–767; Murray, "Ancient Chanttries," 191.

40 Berry, "St Anne's Guild," 50–51.

41 Berry, "St Anne's Guild," 39.

42 Jefferies, *Priests and Prelates*, 24, 25.

43 Helen Roe, "Illustrations of the Holy Trinity in Ireland, Thirteenth to Seventeenth Centuries," *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries in Ireland*, 109 (1979): 101–150.

6 New Church and Collegiate Buildings on the Eve of the Reformation

From the mid-15th century, the corporate power of the newly-chartered confraternities helped in releasing funds for building programmes within the churches and in their vicinities. St Audoen's acquired a new chantry chapel when St Anne's aisle was extended eastwards with the construction of the Portlester chapel in 1455, and St Peter's was expanded to incorporate a southern aisle in 1525.⁴⁴ Perhaps the most potent symbol of chantry collegiate status was the construction of college houses for the accommodation of the chantry chaplains in at least two of the three parishes. In Drogheda, where the parish was tied to monastic rulers in the medieval period through its being endowed on Llanthony priory, there was housing in the precincts for some of the canons, but no definite evidence of a residence for the chantry chaplains. An "old palace," described in 1417 as within the graveyard of St Peter's, housed the archbishops of Armagh while they stayed at Drogheda, and about 1470, permission was granted for the construction of buildings in the graveyard along the glebe wall on the Peter Street side.⁴⁵ It is possible that this project provided lodgings for chantry priests, and was possibly identical to twelve messuages that were part of the chantry college's portfolio of properties in the early 17th century.⁴⁶

Even before the acquisition by St Anne's confraternity in Dublin of a free-standing collegiate house for the chantry priests in 1534, there was a residence probably attached to the south wall of St Anne's aisle. Newly-appointed chaplains, denominated according to their altar, such as "chamber of St Mary's chaplain," were assigned chambers, as well as sacred accoutrements, on top of their annual stipend. When the confraternity took over the former Blakeney's Inns from the family of that name, the chantry priests moved into spacious apartments and the confraternity's meetings were held in a hall on the premises. St Anne's college, as it became known, continued as guild property after the Reformation and even served as a Catholic chapel before its eventual dilapidation and demolition in the late 17th century.⁴⁷ The only extant college

44 The Portlester chapel contained the chantry and tomb of the aristocratic FitzEustace family who lived in the parish: Berry, "St Anne's Guild," 31–32, 81–82.

45 *Cal. Patent Rolls, James I*, 404–405; Bradley, *Drogheda*, 19.

46 See Patrick Little, "Discord in Drogheda: A Window on Irish Church-State Relations in the 1640s," *Historical Research*, 75 (2002): 356.

47 Berry, "St Anne's Guild," 51–54; Colm Lennon, "The Chantries in the Irish Reformation: Case Study of St Anne's Guild, Dublin, 1550–1630" in *Religion, Conflict and Coexistence in Ireland: Essays Presented to Monsignor Patrick Corish* (Dublin: 1990), 6–25, 293–297.

residence of this small group is that of Ardee parish. There the building was erected contiguous to the church shortly before 1487 under the supervision of Chaplain Walter Verdon in order to house the chantry priests of St Mary's church. Besides the chaplains' chambers, the three-storey building had a common room and hall.⁴⁸ Although it is a fragmentary survival, the college at Ardee bespeaks the affluence of the confraternity there and the pride of the patrons in their institution.

7 Confraternities and Parish Identity

The prestige attached to the chantry college in the century before the Reformation is reflected in the vogue for their foundation on the part of the leading nobles of the Englishry, including the Plunketts of Killeen, the Flemings of Slane, both in County Meath, the Prestons of Gormanston, County Louth, the St Lawrences in Howth, County Dublin, and the Fitzgeralds of Maynooth, County Kildare. Like the urban colleges, the institutions concerned, which were established in manorial churches, were based on family cantuarial devotion and had coteries of up to a dozen priests living communally. Of all of these elite foundations, however, only Slane and Killeen qualify as fully confraternal because the rest, while well endowed and staffed, lacked the full incorporation of the brothers, sisters, and clerics. A chantry of four priests was erected into a confraternity dedicated to the Blessed Virgin at Killeen by Sir Christopher Plunkett and his wife, Joan Cusack, about 1430. The confraternity was richly endowed by the couple with 1,000 acres to sustain the devotional round and a collegiate building to house the chaplains. The ruined medieval church contains the family tomb of the founders of the chantry college and members of the extended Plunkett family, to which was restored the bulk of the endowment by the crown in the early 17th century.⁴⁹ The benefaction of the Flemings, barons of Slane, for their own college of chantry chaplains in 1512 was also substantial. The confraternal institution there received 150 acres beside the hill of Slane and elsewhere and the rental of twenty houses to support a community of twelve clerical personnel. The Flemings, who also erected a house of the Third Order Regular of St Francis at Slane and were sponsors of a local eremite,

48 Murray, "Ancient Chantries," 202–204; John Bradley, "The Chantry College, Ardee," *Journal of the County Louth Archaeological and Historical Society* 22 (1989): 16–19.

49 Anthony Cogan, *The Diocese of Meath, Ancient and Modern* (Dublin: 1862), i, 354–358.

commemorated their patronage by having the family coat of arms emblazoned on a wall of the collegiate residence.⁵⁰

While the county elites exercised ecclesiastical rights in respect of manorial churches and sponsored corporate power for their chantry colleges, parishes everywhere in the Pale witnessed an upsurge in widespread lay participation based on a spirit of confraternality.⁵¹ Indeed, the corporateness of the late medieval parish community has been adumbrated as a milieu for the burgeoning role of churchwardens in many centres.⁵² The activities of these parish proctors alongside confraternity and other agents, including masters, wardens, chaplains, brothers and sisters and parishioners in general, helped to forge a sense of a unified parochial identity. In Ardee, though in some ways more akin to the elite parishes than to the urban ones, the consent of all of the burgesses of the town was required for the appointment of Chaplain Nicholas Wodman to the chapel of the Blessed Virgin in St Mary's in 1496.⁵³ For the appointment of Christopher Ledewyche as chaplain in St Anne's chantry in St Peter's, Drogheda, in 1473, the master, guardians and administrators of the confraternity elicited the advice of all the brothers and sisters, and presumably the other chaplains, but the nomination of the chaplain at the altar of the Blessed Virgin was in the gift of the civic corporation, thanks to the pious gift of twenty acres to that body by one Thomas Burgess in 1452.⁵⁴ Meanwhile, in the confraternity of St Anne in Dublin, the masters and wardens, as well as appointing chaplains and consulting the members on the affairs of the guild, were very regularly joined, as lessors of property, by a nexus of parties to deeds, including merchants and municipal officials.⁵⁵

50 *Calendar of Inquisitions in the Office of the Chief Remembrancer of the Exchequer*, (ed.) Margaret Griffith (Dublin: 1991), 241–243; T.J. Westropp, "Slane in Bregia, County Meath: Its Friary and Hermitage," *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*, 30 (1901): 409–430.

51 Empey, "Layperson in the Parish," 25–31; Henry Jefferies, "The Laity in the Parishes of Armagh *inter Anglicos* on the Eve of the Tudor Reformations," *Archivium Hibernicum*, 52 (1998), 73–84.

52 See *The Proctors' Accounts of the Parish of St Werburgh, Dublin, 1481–1627*, (ed.) Adrian Empey (Dublin: 2009).

53 Murray, "Ancient Chantries," 206; in County Meath, the portreeve and commons of the Athboy were the founders of the confraternity, the chaplains of Dunshaughlin chantry were selected by the proctors and the "greater part of the good men of the parish," and twelve parishioners of Greenogue, as well as the bishop of Meath, appointed the chantry chaplains: Lennon, "Parish Fraternities," 96.

54 *Register of Octavian*, ii, 432–433; John D'Alton, *History of Drogheda with its Environs* (Dublin: 1844), 17.

55 See Berry, "St Anne's Guild," 39–47, 51–54 for examples.

The interchangeability of confraternity, parish, and civic personnel in the ecclesiastical and secular spheres further helped to strengthen social and cultural ties in town and county. Several mayors of Dublin had served as masters or wardens of St Anne's confraternity in the 15th and early 16th centuries, such as Sir Robert Burnell (mayor on several occasions, including 1450, the year of his mastership), Thomas Walton (master in 1468 and mayor in 1470), John Serjeant (1489 and 1490) and Nicholas Queytrot (1521 and 1523), while in the 1470s in Drogheda, both John Fowling and John Delahide served as mayor, and confraternity master and warden, respectively. In that city the mayor and aldermen took the lead in the founding of a confraternity in the chapel of St John the Baptist in St Peter's before 1513, providing for a perpetual light before the image of the saint.⁵⁶ A fund of experience was carried over by administrators from the sacred sphere to the secular in respect of corporate regulation, management of landed portfolios, running of elections and selection of appointees to office in municipal corporations and trade guilds.⁵⁷ While none of the chantry colleges under review had formal ties to charitable institutions, there were nevertheless collegiate-style poorhouses and hospitals, such as St Stephen's leper-house in Dublin and the hospitals of the *fratres cruciferi* in Drogheda and Ardee, that would have drawn upon the expertise and philanthropy of confraternity members and parishioners.⁵⁸ The vibrancy of civic religion was on display on occasions such as the feast of Corpus Christi in Dublin, for example, which attracted in procession and dramatic shows the participation of actors from the trade and religious guilds, as well as from the ranks of the civic leadership.⁵⁹

8 The Chantry Colleges and the Reformation

When the Protestant Reformation was introduced into Ireland in the mid-16th century, the dissolution of parish intercessionary institutions that enshrined a belief in Purgatory might have been expected. Unlike in Britain, however, most of the confraternities and chantries in Ireland survived the religious upheavals, though all the religious houses of monks, nuns, and friars were closed by

⁵⁶ *Register of Octavian*, ii, 629.

⁵⁷ For the interconnectedness of the religious and trade associations in Dublin, see *Directory of Historic Dublin Guilds*, (eds.) Mary Clark and Raymond Refaüssé (Dublin: 1993).

⁵⁸ See Colm Lennon, "Dives and Lazarus in Sixteenth-Century Ireland" in *Luxury and Austerity: Historical Studies XXI*, (eds.) Jacqueline Hill and Colm Lennon (Dublin: 1999), 46–65.

⁵⁹ See Alan Fletcher, *Drama, Performance and Polity in Pre-Cromwellian Ireland* (Cork: 2000), 90–101.

1600. Despite occasional proposals of church and state officials, there was no campaign to abolish the Irish confraternities and chantries, perhaps due to administrative neglect or because of the intricacy of links between parishes and religious corporations. In St Audoen's, Dublin, the membership of the guild of St Anne continued to be heavily representative of the aldermanic elite after 1550, its estates of land and property still generated a large rental income, and it maintained its foothold in the parish church and precincts through St Anne's aisle and college. In spite of many challenges to its warrant down to the 1640s and beyond, in the face of which the confraternity successfully pleaded its chartered status, the members retained a discreet Catholic presence within the parish of St Audoen. It was strongly believed by the Protestant authorities that the returns from guild properties were going to fund the activities of priests.⁶⁰

In Drogheda, the parish church of St Peter was at first a centre of opposition to the Reformation: during the reign of Mary Tudor, it was the venue for an important provincial synod of the Irish church at which the ecclesiastical changes under the previous two Tudor monarchs were rolled back. Two successive parish priests of St Peter's were prominent opponents of the religious changes, William Hamlin who died about 1556, and William Poomrell who migrated to Louvain at the beginning of the Elizabethan Reformation. During that era, the extensive resources of the confraternity in St Peter's parish remained in the hands of the brothers and sisters, although the church was taken over for worship by the established Church of Ireland. In 1611 the state authorities undertook a legal challenge to its warrant, but the case was successfully answered by reference to the founding charter of 1436. By that time the "chantry lands," which were bringing in a multiple of the original £29 allowed, were largely in the control of the civic corporation through the intertwining of the interests of the confraternal system with those of the ruling mercantile families of Drogheda. In 1619 a royal grant confirmed to the city corporation the rents from the named chantry and confraternity properties in and around Drogheda in return for the funding by the civic authorities of a choir in St Peter's (now a Protestant centre) comprising six singing men and three chorister boys. The English monarchy was still uneasy, however, about the continuing existence of a Catholic foundation that was in receipt of a large unaccounted-for income. An enquiry was ordered into the chantry lands in Drogheda by King Charles I, and in 1638 the bishop of Derry, John Bramhall, persuaded the civic corporation to transfer

60 For the post-Reformation history of the confraternity of St Anne, see Lennon, "Chantries in the Irish Reformation."

their interest in the chantry lands of St Peter's to the vicar and choir, but that arrangement was undone during the turbulent 1640s.⁶¹

Less is known about the history of St Mary's, Ardee, in the Reformation and after. In the 1540s and 1550s the archbishop of Armagh, George Dowdall, was a former prior of the religious house that claimed the right to present the parish rectory, but his career as a major Catholic dissident and leader of the counter-reform was largely spent outside Ardee. No move was made after an enquiry into the confraternity in 1587 under Queen Elizabeth to abolish it and confiscate its properties, and forty years later in 1627 the "concealed [...] chantry lands of St George, St Katherine, St Mary, Holy Cross and St John in or near Ardee," which had been used to support priests and friars, were the subject of another inquisition. Not until 1635 was the bulk of the confraternity's endowment, "formerly bestowed on the maintenance of popish priests," transferred to the Anglican minister and parish church of Ardee.⁶²

9 Conclusion

The emergence in the decades after 1550 of alternative Catholic parishes within the ecclesiastical structure contributed to the rooting of, first, a recusant and then a Counter-Reformation movement in Ireland. Lay officers of the confraternities continued to appoint chaplains who said mass in private residences or halls and later sponsored the mission of continentally trained clergy who helped to revitalise the Catholic community. While examples could no doubt be multiplied by reference to other places and regions, the cases studied offer reasonably well-documented testimony to a forging of confraternal and parochial bonds over a period of up to three centuries. Initially parish endowments were carefully husbanded for the employment of chantry priests, whose devotions were centred on keeping the obits of benefactors and who became integrated into the propertied estates of the cantuarial system. Under the dynamic leadership of lay patrons, and with the complaisance of the local parochial clergy, a consolidation of resources, both spiritual and temporal, was effected through charters of incorporation and ties of confraternal kinship were reinforced by the collegial presence of the chaplains within the church

61 Jefferies, *Priests and Prelates*, 166, 169; *Irish Patent Rolls of James I*, (ed.) M. Griffith (Dublin: 1966), 404–405; Colm Lennon, "Bridging Division or Bonding Faction? Civic Confraternity and Religious Sodality in Seventeenth-Century Ireland" in *Brotherhood and Boundaries: Fraternità e barriera*, (eds.) Stefania Pastore, Adriano Prosperi and Nicholas Terpstra (Pisa: 2008), 509–518; Little, "Discord in Drogheda," 354–362.

62 Murray, "Ancient Chantries," 207–208.

precincts. Inurement in confraternal, parochial and civic corporativeness bred self-assurance on the part of lay community leaders that resonated with the conservatism of the senior corporate clergy of the Englishry,⁶³ and provided a formidable obstacle to the proponents of political and religious innovation under the later Tudor and early Stuart monarchy.

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63 See Murray, *Enforcing the English Reformation*, 48–81.

Confraternities and Capital Punishment: Charity, Culture, and Civic Religion in the Communal and Confessional Age

Nicholas Terpstra

1 Origins and Overview

The early modern “Spectacle of Punishment” turned criminals into actors on a very public stage. Tortured, hanged or beheaded, and sometimes burned, they were caught in dramas that might bear little clear relation to their crimes. Their bodies were objectified, and the room for them to respond and act in any way was quite limited. At the same time, they were playing out the central Christian drama of sin and redemption in the most immediate way possible. Christ himself had died the humiliating death of a criminal, and in that central act of the cosmic drama of salvation, he had reached out and drawn one of the criminals executed by his side up into heaven with him. Could other thieves, murderers, rapists, and heretics follow?

With stakes for body and soul so high, these unwilling actors in a drama spanning earth and heaven had to be carefully directed and their actions had to be closely stage managed through the last hours of their lives. In some parts of Europe, it was confraternity brothers who took on this role where the theatre of punishment and the theatre of salvation played out on the same public stage. No other confraternity activity so closely demonstrates the intersections of sacred and secular concerns or of pious and political meanings in lay spirituality. None activated the senses and the emotions so intensely. None was as politically and socially charged. Brothers who comforted the condemned were themselves actors in a drama whose developments from the 14th through the 18th centuries demonstrate the key religious, social, and political changes of the period.

The first brotherhoods dedicated to helping prisoners and those condemned to execution emerged in northern Italy in the 1330s and spread through the peninsula. They later also expanded into some other areas of Catholic Europe north of the Alps, particularly the Netherlands and the Hapsburg lands in the southeast Holy Roman Empire, though it is not clear when this happened, or how Italian models may have influenced groups that emerged north of the

Alps.¹ These brotherhoods, called *conforterie* in Italy and *totenbruderschaften* in Austria, generated a rich cultural legacy of paintings, music, and poetry that was used to comfort the condemned through their final night and up to the moment of execution. Accounts of particular executions sometimes became part of an expanding popular media that spawned specialised literature used in comforting, or popular accounts sold on street corners.

With such a wide-ranging and rich cultural legacy, these brotherhoods offering pastoral care to those destined for the scaffold are exceptional subjects for social and political history, artistic, musicological, and literary studies, and studies of the emotions and the senses. This article will focus on the more recent work, while also noting some of the key works of earlier scholarship. It will review three areas in particular: the cultural forms of comforting (literary, visual, and musical), the political, social, and civic religious contexts of comforting in the communal period and renaissance, and the changes to comforting that developed after the Catholic Reformation.

2 Cultural Forms of Comforting

From its 14th-century origins, lay comforting aimed to make it possible for capital criminals to enter heaven, in spite of the many mortal sins that had put them on the scaffold and that should speed them to hell. The biblical model for this was the thief Dismas, crucified with Christ. When another of the thieves being crucified by the Roman authorities that day outside Jerusalem mocked Jesus, saying “Aren’t you the Christ? Save yourself and us!” Dismas turned on him and said: “Don’t you fear God? We are receiving what we deserve, while this man has done nothing wrong.” Turning to Jesus, he then said “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” Christ responded, “Truly I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise.” The account appears only in the gospel of Luke (Luke 23: 39–43) and Dismas did not even receive a name until the 4th-century Gospel of Nicodemus. The syntax and meaning of the passage in Luke has been disputed from the time of the early church, but Dominican

1 The *totenbruderschaft* established in Vienna in 1638 was indeed under the spiritual supervision of the Roman archconfraternity of San Giovanni Decollato dei Fiorentini, which served as Rome’s *conforteria*. The Viennese group assisted criminals and documented every execution. It also published sermons, dance-of-death literature, and *memento mori*. See Claudia Resch, “ABaC:us—Austrian Baroque Corpus” (<http://www.oeaw.ac.at/icltt/abacus>). See also: C. Resch, *Trost im Angesicht des Todes. Frühe reformatorische Anleitungen zur Seelsorge an Kranken und Sterbenden* (Basel: 2006).

theologian Thomas Aquinas (1225–74) confirmed that the thief did indeed gain heaven on the strength of his confession. Inspired perhaps by this, a Dominican friar Venturino da Bergamo began tending to prisoners in Bologna's jails while resident in Bologna from 1331 or 1332 to 1334. He gained followers who, from 1336 formed a confraternity to assist prisoners in jail, to comfort those condemned to death, and to bury their bodies; from this they took the title of St Mary of Death (*Santa Maria della Morte*). While they would eventually open a hospital just off the city's main square, become custodians of its main shrine, and gain archconfraternal status and recognition as one of the most prestigious of Bologna's many brotherhoods, their earliest defining activity, and one they carried out till the end, was comforting prisoners and the condemned.²

While Bologna's St Mary of Death was perhaps the oldest comforting confraternity in Europe, few of its earliest records survive. There remains, however, a 15th-century manual written to instruct lay comforters in their pastoral work that helps us to understand what lay confraternal comforters did.³ The Bolognese model seems to have been followed in many details by groups founded in subsequent years across Italy. Many of these confraternities adopted names that underscored the work of comforting the condemned, suggesting that they had been established for this purpose explicitly. This included above all confraternities dedicated to Mercy/Misericordia (Bergamo, Brescia, Borgo San Sepolcro, Cremona, Genoa, Livorno, Pisa, Turin, Urbino), to St. John the Baptist/San Giovanni Decollato (Alessandria, Faenza, Foligno, Lecce, Milan, Modena, Rome, Siena, Viterbo), to Holy Cross/ Santa Croce (Brisighella, Florence, Lucca), and to Death/Morte or Justice/Giustizia (Ferrara, Mantua, Naples, Perugia, Ravenna). In some instances, a colloquial name replaced the formal dedication in local accounts, usually based on the colour of the robes and hoods that completely obscured the comforters in their public processions. These were either White/Bianchi (Catania, Naples, Palermo) or Black/Neri (Florence). Other dedications suggest that the work was taken on by

2 Mario Fanti dates the origins of Santa Maria della Morte to 13 July 1336 and dispels the many myths surrounding its origins and activity; see his "La Confraternita di Santa Maria della Morte e la Conforteria dei condannati a Bologna nei secoli XIX e XV," in *Confraternite e città a Bologna nel medioevo e nell'età moderna*, (ed.) Mario Fanti (Rome: 2001), 61–174 (originally published 1978).

3 For the text of this manual, together with essays explaining the literary, theatrical, theological, and musical contexts, see *The Art of Executing Well: Rituals of Execution in Renaissance Italy*, (ed.) Nicholas Terpstra (Kirkville: 2008). The text of the manual itself, translated by Sheila Das, is found at 193–288, while a scholarly edition in Italian is available in Alfredo Troiano, "Il Manuale quattrocentesco della Conforteria di Bologna: Il ms. Morgan 188 della Pierpont Morgan Library (New York)," in *Misericordia: Conversioni sotto il patibolo tra medioevo ed età moderna*, (ed.) Adriano Prosperi (Pisa: 2007), 347–479.

an existing group that had emerged from some other local devotion, like the brotherhood of St John the Evangelist (San Giovanni Evangelista) in Padua or the School of St. Fantino (Scuola di San Fantin) in Venice.⁴

The Bolognese manual set out the general framework that comforters across Italy used in their charitable work. On the evening before an execution, members of the brotherhood were summoned by judicial officials. They went first to the *conforteria's* oratory in the Hospital of St Mary of Death just off of Bologna's main square in order to pray with the company's prior, get their robes, and choose some of the *tavolette*, rectangular wooden images depicting martyrs or spiritual lessons, that they used to accompany their work. Larger tavolette, often organised as graphic narratives, were held in two hands. Smaller ones with a single image per side had a handle on the bottom that made them easier to carry and use. The comforters walked to the civic prison in the Communal Palace and made their way to where the condemned prisoner was held. This was likely a large open room, and the prisoner's friends and family might already be there. Comforters might have to wait while these people talked together before they could insinuate themselves into the conversation. Some confraternities brought more members into the prison so that some could keep family and other inmates at a distance while one or two of the more skilled comforters began encouraging the prisoner to think of his or her soul and its future. Like Dismas, the condemned person had to admit personal guilt and the justice of the sentence, and pray to Jesus for forgiveness. Beyond this, the prisoner had to forgive all enemies and those involved in the execution, from judge, to wardens, to executioner. And, like Dismas, a prisoner had to be calm and confident to the last breath. In keeping with the contemporary Art of Dying Well, a despairing soul could be seized by the devil and rushed to hell, whereas angels ushered the soul confident of salvation straight to heaven.

This was a hard sell. Comforters had to persuade, challenge, threaten, and entice the condemned man or woman before them. The Bolognese comforters' manual offered a wide range of arguments that comforters could use with resentful, sceptical, stubborn, depressed, or unresponsive prisoners. It included stories from the Bible and from saints' lives, tales of miraculous deliverances, and homilies on pastoral care. They balanced threats of hell with promises of heaven and, in Bologna at least, seem to have emphasised the latter. Comforters drew on the *imitatio Christi*, and above all the Passion, to explain why and how a prisoner ought quietly to endure an unjust sentence, public torture or humiliation, and a violent death. Their work was not only verbal. Comforters

4 For an extensive local bibliography see Adriano Prosperi, "Morire volentieri: condannati a morte e sacramenti," in *Misericordia*, 54–70.

brought out their tavolette to illustrate the stories and particularly to show which saints had experienced the punishments awaiting the condemned man, and so who the prisoner might work to imitate. They prayed. They sang spiritual songs, based on the vernacular praise songs that most large confraternities taught their members and sang in the streets, oratories, and possibly churches. The light of a small lamp in a dark cell caught the gilt of the tavolette, and the sound of the songs shut out the conversation of prisoners or family members in the cell. Rhythmic refrains kept time and message in a regular beat. The comforters were busy weaving a sensory cocoon around the condemned man or woman, trying to keep their attention focused beyond the body's execution and on to the soul's eternal destiny. They worked to maintain this sensory, emotional, and spiritual cocoon from night into morning, from the dark cell to the public reading of the sentence, from that reading of the sentence to the scaffold, and then from the last confession and prayer to the moment of death.

Bologna's manual is one of many found across Italy, and many confraternities followed the general pattern while varying the rituals. The comforters of Venice's St Fantino formally inducted prisoners into their brotherhood by putting their mantle over the condemned person's shoulders at the beginning of the process. There, as in Rome and Parma, four or six brothers might enter the prison and accompany the procession. The additional Roman brothers processed at dawn with lit torches from their church to the prison to bring the condemned to the scaffold.⁵ Each practice is set out in local manuals and in the records of executions. The Bolognese manual consists of two parts: an earlier one written by a possibly apocryphal early 15th-century Observant Augustinian friar Cristoforo da Bologna, which puts a theologian's lessons into a preacher's cadences; and a later anonymous one written by a layman who clearly was describing his own experiences as a comforter.⁶ All extant copies of this manual are in manuscript. In fact, few comforters' manuals were ever published, at least until the later 16th and 17th centuries.⁷ This underscores

5 Meryl Bailey, "Carrying the Cross in Early Modern Venice," in *Space, Place, and Motion: Locating Confraternities in the Late Renaissance and Early Modern City*, (ed.) Diana Bullen Presciutti (Leiden: 2017), 259–262. Jean Weisz, "Caritas/Controriforma: The Changing Role of a Confraternity's Ritual," in *Crossing the Boundaries: Christian Piety and the Arts in Italian Medieval and Renaissance Confraternities*, (ed.) Konrad Eisenbichler (Kalamazoo: 1991), 221–236. Vincenzo Paglia, *La morte confortata: riti della paura e mentalità religiosa a Roma nell'età moderna* (Rome: 1982).

6 Nicholas Terpstra, "Comforting by the Books: Editorial Notes on the Bolognese Comforters Manual," in *Art of Executing Well*, 183–192.

7 Adriano Prosperi, "Il sangue e l'anima. Ricerche sulle compagnie di giustizia in Italia," *Quaderni storici* 51 (1982): 959–999. Prosperi notes that a rich library of texts develops through the early modern period. Some examples: Zanobi de' Medici, *Trattato*

both the art and mystery of this pastoral work, as well as its intensely personal and private nature. Late 15th-century copies of the manual have both parts intact, while copies from the 16th century steadily condense and excise the more abstractly theologically first part. The practical advice of the second part is always left whole and intact. Moreover, in what is perhaps the best exemplar, held by the Pierpont Morgan library, the vellum pages of the first part are stiff and clean, while those of the second part are softer and stained—they have been used, and they bear the marks.

Another very individual element in each copy of the manual is the selection of *laude* that have been copied into the pages. No two have the same selection, though there are some songs that repeat more than others.⁸ Most address death explicitly, and one of the most popular “Have Mercy, O God Most High” (“Misericordia o alto Dio soprano”) has a drum-like chorus of “Misericordia” opening each refrain that beats out the message of mercy as regularly as a metronome.⁹ It is tempting to think of confraternal comforters singing these together with the condemned, yet it is not entirely clear how or even whether they were sung. We have no musical notation for any of them, and none of the extant texts include the “cantasi come” note that indicates what tune may be used for singing.¹⁰ Some are also very long and might have been read rather than sung. An account attributed to Luca della Robbia of the last hours of the young Florentine nobles Pier Paolo Boscoli and Agostino Capponi, executed in 1512 for conspiracy against the Medici, is ambiguous about how comforters used the *laude*. It notes that, at a certain point in the night, members of Florence’s comforting confraternity, the Company of the Blacks, “as was customary began to sing the penitential psalms, or rather, to read them.” Boscoli shushed

utilissimo in conforto dei condannati a morte per via di giustizia (Rome: 1565). Marcello Mansi, *Documenti per confortare i condannati a morte* (Rome: 1625). Giovanni Battista Gargiaria, *Conforto de gli aflitti condannati a morte* (Piacenza: 1650).

8 Pamela Gravestock, “Comforting the Condemned and the Role of Laude in early Modern Italy,” in *Early Modern Confraternities in Europe and the Americas: International and Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, (eds.) Christopher Black and Pamela Gravestock (Aldershot: 2006), 129–150. Pamela Gravestock, “Comforting with Song: Using Laude to Assist Condemned Prisoners,” in *The Art of Executing Well*, 31–51. For some laude texts in translation, see Sheila Das and Nicholas Terpstra, “Book 3: Laude and Prayers,” in *The Art of Executing Well*, 276–288. For a critical edition of the best exemplar, see Alfredo Troiano, *Il Laudario di S. Maria della Morte di Bologna. Il ms. 1069 della Yale Beinecke Library* (Pisa: 2010). For a comprehensive collection of *laude* texts see Gioia Filocamo, “‘Orationi al cepo ovvero a la scala’: le laude della confraternita bolognese di S. Maria della Morte” (Ph.D., University of Bologna, 2015).

9 *The Art of Executing Well*, 47, 282–284.

10 Gioia Filocamo, “‘Death-Spectacles’ in Quattrocento Life and Laude,” *Journal of Early Modern Christianity* 2 (2015): 30.

them, "Fathers and brothers, I don't need this noise in my ears, it bothers me a lot. I have little time, please be quiet so that I can confess. This singing of yours doesn't please me. If you want quietly, by yourselves, to pray to God for me, I beg that of you, and will be indebted to you." A Dominican friar attending added, "'Yes, each of you speak like that, silently, which will be the same, and won't bother us.' And so it was done. All those men got busy praying silently to God for them because, to tell the truth, the first way was rather indiscreet, though well meant."¹¹

Della Robbia's account casts a rather poor light on the comforters who sought to help Boscoli and Capponi. They were intrusive, insensitive, and almost obtuse. Whether recited or sung, their *laude* seemed more to agitate than to calm the two young noblemen. Alison Frazier notes that della Robbia's account has another agenda, which was to highlight the more spiritually sensitive role played by the Dominican friar who is, like the noblemen, a follower of Savonarola. The authorship and dating are also uncertain, and the narrative may actually have been written long after della Robbia died. To what end? Frazier notes that the account itself became part of the broader library of texts that Florentine comforters used and that its distinctive melding of humanist and Christian ethics, above all in the rather stereotyped portrayal of two plotters who bear their fates with the nobility of ancient Romans, would have made it more effective as a model for how later patrician political prisoners of the Medici ought to die. Nicholas Scott Baker has shown that there was no shortage of such prisoners in the later Florentine republic and then the Duchy, some of them followers of Savonarola.¹² Boscoli and Capponi accepted their fate calmly as humanistically educated Florentines and as followers of Savonarola—all the more conveniently exemplary for authorities when the sentence was unjust, the execution excessive, and the regime illegitimate.

There were precedents for blending Dismas' public assertion of the justice of his sentence with the fraught political circumstances of the Italian Renaissance. Alfredo Troiano has shown how poems written by political prisoners awaiting the scaffold became part of the comforters' corpus.¹³ Brothers Giovanni Luco and Giovanni Marco Pio, together with their secretary Andrea Viarani, were condemned and executed in Ferrara in 1469 for conspiring to overthrow Duke Borso d'Este of Ferrara. The brothers were Borso's nephews and feudatories as

11 Alison Knowles Frazier, "Luca della Robbia's Narrative on the Execution of Pietro Paolo Boscoli and Agostino Capponi," in *The Art of Executing Well*, 316.

12 Nicholas Scott Baker, "For Reasons of State: Political Executions, Republicanism, and the Medici in Florence, 1480–1560," *Renaissance Quarterly* 62 (2009): 444–478.

13 Alfredo Troiano, "Un laudario per condannati a morte: il ms. 1069 della Beinecke Library di Yale," *Studi e problemi di critica testuale* 72 (2006): 31–70.

Lords of Carpi. All three were comforted by Ferrara's *conforteria* of St Mary of the Annunciation, which later incorporated some poems attributed to them into its comforting manual; the poems also appear in a number of the Bolognese manuals. Troiano is skeptical of their authorship, both on account of the speed of composition—all three men were actually executed soon after their arrest—and also because the poems so overtly accept the justice of the execution and offer such inspiring models of noblemen accepting their deaths calmly. This convenient message certainly appears in the public scaffold literature produced elsewhere, like the last speeches of English prisoners facing execution. Yet, in these latter instances historians have sometimes found gaps between the speeches as presented and the speeches as later printed for public distribution. The work of Frazier and Troiano shows that Italian examples also bear close scrutiny.

"Scaffold literature" always had as much of an eye to public audiences as to private devotion and charity. Comforting texts drew from a variety of popular contemporary literary forms, and sometimes the transformation of a poem or narrative into a comforting text came incidentally and after the fact.¹⁴ Kathleen Falvey has explored how much early drama drew from the public rituals of execution, to the point where 14th-century Perugian guildsmen putting on miracle plays may have borrowed execution equipment from their confraternity brothers.¹⁵ Virginia Cox has written of an extraordinary body of poems produced around the execution in 1587 of young lovers Ippolita Passarotti and Lodovico Landinelli, poisoners of Ippolita's father after he refused them permission to marry.¹⁶ Thousands turned out to witness their beheading in Bologna's main square and dozens of poets argued back and forth over the justice of the case in a series of about 80 manuscript and printed poems. Cox notes that their use of Petrarchist forms for a subject usually expressed in ballads and broadsheets demonstrates how lively and engaged the local literary conversation was. This Romeo and Juliet style drama had earlier parallels in a famous Florentine story of Ippolito Buondelmonti and Dianora Bardi, young lovers from warring families. As Meryl Bailey has shown, the late 16th-century artist and author Giulio Cesare Croce used a similar theme to market execution broadsheets. His account of Ippolita and Lodovico was distinctly more sympathetic than his broadsheet verse account of a Ferrarese Jew Manas, executed in

14 Gioia Filocamo and Daniella Delcorno Branca, "Quattro sonetti di Boccaccio nel repertorio di un confortatore bolognese," *Studi sul Boccaccio* 18 (2015): 29–52.

15 Kathleen Falvey, "Scaffold and Stage: Comforting Rituals and Dramatic Traditions in Late Medieval and Renaissance Italy," in *The Art of Executing Well*, 13–30.

16 Virginia Cox, "The Laurel and the Axe: Petrarchist Execution Lyrics in Late-Renaissance Italy," *Renaissance Studies* 29 (2015): 720–748.

1590 for adultery with a Christian woman.¹⁷ The latter poem's repeated drum-beat refrain of "O Manas traitor" has the same metronomic quality found in the popular *conforteria lauda* "Have Mercy, O God Most High" noted above. These texts occupied an ambiguous middle ground between popular literature and private comforting. It seems that some comforters were willing to move from one to the other as they developed the art of consoling the condemned.¹⁸ But when the story hit the streets, anything could happen. Una McIlvenna reviews some of these same texts to show how genre shaped approach in Italian printed execution ballads: *ottava rima* was used for straightforward accounts, *terza rima* for more reflective and sometimes more sympathetic renderings of stories like that of Ippolito and Dianora, and *barzalette* for violent, jocular, and even mocking accounts of the crime and punishment of outsiders like Manas.¹⁹

The visual tools used to calm the condemned also looked two ways, privately to the prisoner and publicly to broader audiences. Samuel Edgerton Jr.'s landmark *Pictures and Punishment: Art and Criminal Prosecution during the Florentine Renaissance* (1985) was the first work in English to describe how tavolette were created and used. It was, in fact, one of the first works in English to describe the *conforterie* in any detail.²⁰ Edgerton was able to draw on some contemporary images that showed how comforters used the tavolette, particularly as the prisoner walked or rode to the scaffold. Grasping the smaller tavolette by the handle attached to the bottom, they thrust the image directly into the face of the condemned. In some cases they could open up small hinged wings on either side of the tavoletta effectively cutting off the prisoner's lateral vision. With the image of a martyred saint directly in front of their eyes, and with the sound of prayers or *laude* in their ears, prisoners might be able to keep from despair at the sight and thought of their spouses, their orphaned children, and of their vulnerable souls, or from rage at the thought of accomplices who had escaped justice.

17 Meryl Bailey, "Public Execution in Popular Verse: The Poems of Giulio Cesare Croce," in *The Art of Executing Well*, 327–339.

18 Nicholas Terpstra, "Body Politics: The Criminal Body Between Public and Private," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 45 (2015): 7–52.

19 Una McIlvenna, "Singing Songs of Execution in Early Modern Italy," in *Voices and Texts in Early Modern Italian Society*, (eds.) Stefano Dall'Aglio, Brian Richardson, Massimo Rospocher (Abingdon: 2017), 58–64. See also Rosa Salzberg and Massimo Rospocher, "Murder Ballads: Singing, Hearing, Writing, and Reading About Murder in Renaissance Italy," in *Murder in Renaissance Italy*, (eds.) Trevor Dean, K.J.P. Lowe (Cambridge: 2017), 164–187.

20 Samuel Y. Edgerton Jr., *Pictures and Punishment: Art and Criminal Prosecution During the Florentine Renaissance* (Ithaca: 1985). The book expanded on an earlier article, "A Little-Known 'Purpose of Art' in the Italian Renaissance," *Art History* 2 (1979): 45–61.

Confraternities kept a store of tavolette almost as varied as their libraries of manuals and statutes. Here, too, the key to comforting lay in determining what models best fit the immediate situation.²¹ Early martyrs had faced beheading, dismemberment, burning, and flaying alive, and so comforters whose charges faced similar punishments could certainly take tavolette depicting St. John the Baptist, St. Catherine, St. Lawrence, or St. Bartholomew respectively. Civic, neighbourhood, or patron saints might also help stimulate repentance. Comforters thus likely armed themselves with a selection of tavolette based on their understanding of the prisoner or the crime. The larger boards depicting narrative sequences may have been used earlier in the process to illustrate a saint's life or gospel message. Some could have been more contemporary, like the early 16th-century Florentine panel painting that tells the story of the minor nobleman Antonio Rinaldeschi. After loosing at gambling, the drunk and blaspheming Rinaldeschi angrily threw dung at a Marian image. The painting depicts the angry act, then his flight, capture, imprisonment, trial, and eventual fate as a calm and repentant *condannato* who was comforted in his final hours by Florence's Company of the Blacks. His soul was whisked to heaven by angels sent to battle the demons who stalked him. We do not know for certain whether the Company of the Blacks used the Rinaldeschi panel as a tool in comforting, and the authors of the most recent study examining the case and the documents it generated do not mention the possibility.²² Yet, its careful depiction in multiple images of the crime and the judicial process, its triumphant resolution with the comforting of Rinaldeschi by the brothers of the Blacks, and the final image of angels vanquishing demons as they take his soul to heaven are as carefully and deliberately curated as the roughly contemporary Boscoli and Capponi narrative, and the earlier Viarani and Pio poems.

Edgerton relied on tavolette of the 16th century and later and believed that none remained from the 14th century. More recently, Italian art historian Massimo Ferretti traced a large body of early tavolette still extant in a range of European galleries and usually identified as fragments of altarpieces. Ferretti was able to identify many two-sided tavolette that had been carefully sawn apart so that they could be sold as two separate works. Reuniting them photographically and digitally showed that comforters could turn single tavolette back and forth to show "before and after" stories. One side might show a saint's martyrdom and the other his or her arrival in heaven. Many showed prisoners

21 Lawrence J. Feinberg, "Imagination all Compact: Tavolette and Confraternity Rituals for the Condemned in Renaissance Italy," *Apollo* 161 (2005): 48–57.

22 William J. Connell and Giles Constable, *Sacrilege and Redemption in Renaissance Florence: The Case of Antonio Rinaldeschi* (Toronto: 2005): 24–25.

being presented by the saint to the Virgin Mary in heaven. Ferretti was able to date a number of these to the early 1330s and to Bologna, meaning that he had identified the first tavolette used by the first *conforteria* in Europe.²³ More tellingly, he was able to see from the evidence of early and frequent restorations that prisoners must have kissed intensely some of the images on these tavolette since in a number of cases the heads of Mary and the saints had been repainted more than once. Marin Sanudo recorded in his diary that a convict executed in Venice in 1514 similarly kissed a crucifix held up to him by his comforters from St Fantino.²⁴

The cultural forms that comforting generated, whether literary, theatrical, musical, or artistic, almost all assumed a process in which male Christian comforters assisted male prisoners. Some plays, poems, and broadsheets included female prisoners, and some tavolette included female martyrs. Admittedly far more men than women mounted the scaffold. Yet, while women were certainly executed and comforted, the manuals say nothing specifically about how to comfort a woman, and there are no records of female comforters. Adriano Prosperi has explored some of the dynamics of gender in his account of a young woman executed for infanticide in 1709, but more should be done; this remains a significant area for future research.²⁵ There are also no indications on whether or how Jews or Muslims were comforted. Did comforters use that opportunity to encourage deathbed conversions? Did they offer a more generic emotional calming to ensure a quiet execution? Were they present at all? This, too, is an area needing further research.

3 Comforting, Communal Politics, and Civic Religion

Confraternities emerged and expanded together with Italian urban communes from the 12th and 13th centuries. With an early membership made up largely of urban artisans, merchants, and professionals, their devotional life in the first centuries inevitably framed the core of a civic religion that tuned Catholic doctrine to communal rhythms, priorities, and needs. As some confraternities opened hospitals, pilgrims' hostels, or orphanages, they developed a more

23 Massimo Ferretti, "In Your Face: Paintings for the Condemned in Renaissance Italy," in *The Art of Executing Well*, 79–97. For the identification of the Bolognese *tavolette* see 84–85. This is a condensed translation of Massimo Ferretti, "Pittura per condannati a morte nel Trecento bolognese," in *Misericordia*, 85–151.

24 Bailey, "Carrying the Cross," 262.

25 Adriano Prosperi, *Infanticide, Secular Justice, and Religious Debate in Early Modern Europe* (Turnout: 2016), 321–367.

bureaucratic focus in order to serve institutional needs and priorities: when urban populations came to depend on the services that the confraternities served out of charitable zeal, continuity became an issue. This public charitable work was focused on fulfilling the seven works of corporal charity through actions oriented to members, the broader public, and travellers. While many confraternal sisters and brothers gave their time, energy, and resources to personally feed the poor, care for orphans, or heal the sick, very few engaged in a charitable outreach that approached the intensity of comforting those condemned to death. So, while the comforting confraternities definitely became central to the urban life of their towns, these brotherhoods usually remained far smaller than other confraternities, particularly those that ran large institutional charities.

Two indices that serve as markers of their evolution are the social origins and class of members, and the political forms and ritual roles that comforting confraternities took on. While documents are scarce, all indications are that early members came from the artisanal and professional ranks, and that a social ennobling transformed the *conforterie* by the 15th and 16th centuries. Konrad Eisenbichler's study of the Florentine Company of the Blacks has demonstrated the familiar dynamic. In the 1470s, Lorenzo de' Medici himself joined the Blacks but, while they carried out their work anonymously under the full robe and hood that gave them their name, Eisenbichler believes it unlikely that *il Magnifico* ever sang or prayed with a prisoner through the night or accompanied him to a scaffold.²⁶ Like many of the de facto rulers of the time, he joined many confraternities in order to build and preserve his networks, and to demonstrate charity, spirituality, and patronage. His presence in the Blacks drew many other highborn into the group who displaced those of lower social status. Some of the comforters who assisted Rinaldeschi in his last hours, or whose chanting distracted Boscoli and Capponi, may have known Lorenzo de' Medici as a confraternal brother.

Or perhaps not. The factionalism and debt-settling that politicised executions in the late 15th and early 16th centuries may simply have led many members to abandon or avoid the *conforterie*. This seems to have been the case in Bologna and may explain the complete absence of administrative records for the Company of St Mary of Death before 1538, when things finally settled. From that point, the occupational, social, and political status of members steadily rose until by the end of the 16th century this *conforteria* also counted high clerics and nobles among its members. Bologna's comforters worked in

26 Konrad Eisenbichler, "Lorenzo de' Medici and the Confraternity of the Blacks in Florence," *Fides et Historia* 26 (1994): 85–98.

pairs, with a senior Master (who might comfort dozens over the years) and a junior Disciple (who might assist at a handful for a year or two). Many young and ambitious highborn men spent time as Disciples as part of their move up the political and social ladder. In Naples, the politicisation of executions under the Spanish regime had the opposite effect of drawing more highborn members into the group, where they aimed to delay executions with their rituals. The frustrated Spanish responded in the 1560s by forbidding sacraments to the condemned, and when Pope Pius V ordered them in 1569 to restore the traditional right, they did so only under tight restrictions. King Philip II then suspended the group in 1583, and when pressured to re-open it a few years later, ordered that only clerics could join and serve as comforters.²⁷

The political tensions of this period play out in another administrative record that survives in many Italian cities: the *conforteria's* Book of the Dead. In many cities, this ongoing register, kept by generations of *conforteria* scribes, of who was executed on what day in what way and for what crimes remains the best—often the only—readily accessible list of those who were executed from the late communal period to the end of the Ancien Regime. This led some early 20th century Italian historians to prepare critical editions for publication.²⁸ The records are more selective than they seem, particularly for earlier centuries, misleading historians who have relied on them to track the rise and fall of urban crime rates.²⁹ Yet, the fact that they were kept at all, the level of detail that some obtained (including names of comforters and descriptive narratives about the crimes or executions), and the fact that libraries and archives across Italy are filled with the many handwritten copies penned by local historians and antiquarians throughout the early modern period, remind us that comforting was not simply a spiritual or charitable act. It was public, political, and even administrative. Bologna's Company of St Mary of Death kept two ledgers: one by the *conforteria* that recorded executions, and one by the confraternity's hospital that recorded burials. The latter combined all those who had died under the brotherhood's care, whether criminals on the scaffold, ailing Bolognese in

27 Adriano Prosperi, "Consolation or Condemnation: The Debates on Withholding Sacraments from Prisoners," in *The Art of Executing Well*, 113–114. Giovanni Romeo, *Aspettando il boia: Condannati a morte, confortatori, e inquisitori nella Napoli della Controriforma* (Florence: 1993): 105–130.

28 Mario Roberti, "Il libro dei giustiziati de Ferrara, a. 1441–1577" *Atti del R. Istituto Veneto di scienze, lettere, ed arti* 46 (1906–07): 829–840. Giuseppe Rondoni, "I 'giustiziati' a Firenze (dal secolo XV al secolo XVIII)," *Archivio storico italiano* Series V, 28 (1901): 209–256.

29 Andrea Zorzi, "The Judicial System in Florence in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries," in *Crime, Society, and the Law in Renaissance Italy*, (eds.) Trevor Dean & Katherine J.P. Lowe (Cambridge: 1994), 43.

its hospital, pilgrims en route to Rome, or prisoners in the city's jail cells. In a distinctive sign of the reciprocity that frequently marked medieval charity, all these dead were described in the Book of the Dead as brothers and sisters of the Company of St Mary of Death. The scribes entered all of them, whether highborn or lower-class, sequentially by date of burial, regardless of origin or cause of death, and in absence of the formal procedures otherwise required in order to join the confraternity. This continued at least until 1588, when early modern manners trumped medieval reciprocity and criminals and prisoners were consigned to a separate record—The Book of the Executed—and no longer described as confraternal kin.³⁰

Pastoral and public roles had frequently fit only awkwardly together. *Conforteria* members ushered the prisoner from the prison to the public reading of the sentence, where they flanked the prisoner and aimed to distract him or her with their various sensory tools. They accompanied the condemned to a final sacramental confession and thence to the scaffold, and continued using prayers, songs, and tavolette after the executioner had done his work. Beheading was immediate, but a hanged person could take 20–30 minutes to die. Through all this time, as in the night before in the cells, the comforters were not their prisoners' advocates in any court but the court of heaven. They could not intercede for him and had to shut down any effort to question the sentence. Clearly this had not been the case in Naples under the Spanish, but we do not know whether comforters elsewhere took the opportunity offered by their position and access to intervene in cases.

If anything, their ritual role and hence their political prominence rested on ensuring a calm and quiet execution. The values of late medieval communalism and late medieval charity intersected in a civic religion that placed a high value on laity acting as public liturgists. They sanctified not only the spaces of the city, but also the religious role of the laity itself. They occupied not only the intersections of justice and mercy and of lay and clerical religion, but also of ritual and magic. In safeguarding the living prisoner, the executed corpse, and sometimes the implements of execution, they were taking custody of powerful tools: Neapolitans thought that pieces of the hangman's rope could divert the evil eye. The corpses themselves could be fought over by factional partisans seeking revenge, devoted allies seeking relics, or medical students seeking bodies for anatomy. Confraternities used processions to insert themselves as central agents in both the drama of salvation and the sanctification of urban life and space. The brothers of Venice's Scuola di San Fantin brought the condemned

30 Nicholas Terpstra, "Theory into Practice: Executions, Comforting, and Comforters in Renaissance Italy," in *The Art of Executing Well*, 139–140.

on a route through the city, moving by gondola from the prison behind the ducal palace up the Grand Canal to the Church of Santa Croce in the far northwest. Here the prisoner was whipped and possibly further mutilated before being walked across town with the robed brothers, stopping at the altars of the churches of San Geminiano and San Marco that flanked the city's main square, before proceeding to execution between the columns in the Piazzetta San Marco overlooking that part of the Grand Canal known as the Bacino di San Marco. The brothers brought the famous miracle-working crucifix from their oratory on this circuitous route that traversed the city and ended mere metres from where it had begun.³¹ Florence's Company of the Blacks also underscored their status as civic-religious liturgists when they brought prisoners from the civic court and prison of the Bargello east down the Via dei Malcontenti to the scaffold outside the city walls, stopping first in their own confraternity church and then at a public shrine a few steps further down the road. Their route and their visual, aural, and devotional tools aimed to bridge the gap between civic and religious, and between lay and clerical. Similarly, when Bologna's comforters of St Mary of Death or Siena's Company of St John the Beheaded left their oratories in the hospitals that marked their city's squares and accompanied a condemned man or woman to the place of execution, they connected the dots, kinetically, theologically, and ritually, in the city's network of lay-directed civic religious charity.

The *conforteria's* own quarters were key dots in that network. The number, location, and profile of any group's spaces said a lot about its place in civic priorities and consciousness. Many began modestly, but by the later 15th century most cities had given their comforters one or more spaces within major civic buildings or hospitals, or along the routes that prisoners took to their execution. Florence's Blacks were given the use of a prominent and richly frescoed chapel in the prison-court of the Bargello already dedicated to the Magdalen. Highborn criminals like Antonio Rinaldeschi might be executed within the Bargello courtyard or hanged from its windows. The long route that others took did not only include a visit to the altar in the confraternity's oratory half-way down the Via dei Malcontenti, but ended at the confraternity chapel built on land given to it by the commune in 1361 at the place of execution.³² Siena's St John the Beheaded had its chapel deep within Santa Maria della Scala, the

31 Bailey, "Carrying the Cross," 244–270.

32 The frescoes and the chapel's dedication to the Magdalen predate its use by the Blacks, though civic and *conforteria* officials likely found that they made the space even more appropriate for the work of helping persuade criminals to repent and convert. Amee Yunn, *The Bargello Palace: The Invention of Civic Architecture in Florence* (Turnhout: 2015): 184–185.

hospital that occupied the central spot in the city's geography, economy, charitable, and cultic life. Naples' Company of the Whites of Justice similarly had an elaborate chapel within the extensive complex of the syphilitics' hospital of Santa Maria del Popolo degli Incurabili at the northern edge of the city core. Bologna's St Mary of Death also had quarters in the eponymous confraternity hospital from the 14th century and by the 16th had gained a private room within the main Torrone prison, a dedicated chapel for comforting within the Podestà's palace complex on Piazza Maggiore, and a chapel dedicated to St John the Beheaded adjacent to the scaffold at the north end of the city. Rome's St John the Beheaded had a new and very public church just south of the Campidoglio where many executions took place.

4 Comforting in the Catholic Reformation and the Confessional Age

Why was the phenomenon of lay comforting so common in Italy and so rare outside it? Civic religious traditions in communes and city states take us some of the distance to understanding the laity's central role, but why offer comfort at all? Adriano Prosperi has explored how different the ethos was in Iberia and France, where capital criminals were commonly thought to have forfeited the right to final confession and communion. Political and clerical elites there agreed that those committing capital crimes had put the noose around their own necks and damned themselves to hell. Some French theologians such as Jean Gerson advocated mercy, but a royal decree of 1397 authorizing it seems to have remained largely a dead letter. A series of 15th and 16th-century popes explicitly allowed Italian confraternities to administer sacraments to the condemned (Innocent VIII, Leo X, Paul III, Julius III, Pius IV). Yet, the consensus for withholding the sacraments remained strong in many parts of Europe even into the mid 18th century when Benedict XIV (r. 1740–58) stated in a theological treatise that it was a bishop's obligation to ensure that the condemned should receive them.³³ Before rising to the papacy, and while still cardinal archbishop of Bologna, he had been enrolled as a member of Bologna's Company of St Mary of Death.

Comforting was itself a product of religious reform devotion. The *conforterie* emerged in the context of 14th-century observant and mendicant movements, and specifically the devotional processions that Venturino da Bergamo

33 Adriano Prosperi, "Consolation or Condemnation: The Debates on Withholding Sacraments from Prisoners," in *The Art of Executing Well*, 98–117; see 115 in particular. Prosperi, "Morire volentieri," 3–70.

was leading to Rome in 1335. The Observant preoccupations with the *Imitatio Christi*, the Passion, and individual preparation for death certainly shaped both the cultural forms of comforting and comforters' own willingness to take on the work. Many of the comforting confraternities that expanded rapidly across the Italian peninsula in the 15th century had direct or indirect connections to the reforming Observance movement, but this does not seem to have been a central feature elsewhere. In most other parts of Europe it was clergy who took on the role of comforting the condemned, whether with or without sacraments. As Reformations of a different kind reframed ecclesiastical institutions both north and south of the Alps from the early 16th century, confraternities of all kinds disappeared from Protestant polities, and so the very institutional framework for lay comforting of the condemned disappeared to be replaced by clerical agents of state churches. Catholic confraternities, including *conforterie*, were reframed to become critical agents both of the more confessionalised Catholicism coming from Rome and of the more stratified social and political order of absolutist and colonizing states.

A number of social and cultural forces transformed comforting and *conforterie* through the early modern period, not least the declining rate of public executions from the later 17th century. Florence's Blacks lost their chief *raison d'être* when Grand Duke Pietro Leopoldo abolished capital punishment in 1786. While the Italian state would not formally end capital punishment until 1889, the last execution before a brief revival in the Fascist era took place in 1877. In many places the practice had ended earlier, such as Naples in 1862.

The greater change to comforting came centuries earlier in the context of the Catholic Reformation, when regular and secular clergy began to pay more attention both to confraternities generally and to comforting in particular. Some of the new religious orders of the Catholic Reformation, above all the Capuchins and Jesuits, made comforting a focus of their charitable mission. This may have been welcome in some parts of Italy and Europe, but in some cities such as Bologna it was hotly resisted in a fight in 1586 that brought the city's Senate into a showdown with the Papal Legate, who had allowed the local Capuchins to comfort a prisoner. The Company of Death was determined to protect its monopoly on the *conforteria* and, after an intense political struggle, it was successful.³⁴ Clerical involvement in confraternities generally expanded after Trent, both through the increase in episcopal visitations of confraternities that included reviews of statutes, spaces, and charitable activities, and

34 Terpstra, "Theory into practice," 150–152.

also through Clement VIII's requirement that local bishops had to approve all new brotherhoods. *Conforterie* in Bologna, Rome, Naples, Turin, Ferrara, Lecce, and Catania were elevated to archconfraternal status, granting them a richer spiritual treasury with which to carry out their work, and more powers and obligations to mentor and supervise the work of subordinate comforting groups elsewhere. In this way, starting in 1638 Rome's archconfraternity of St John the Beheaded mentored Vienna's *totenbruderschaft*.

This expanded social role accelerated and was accelerated by the ennobling process that transformed many confraternities through the Ancien Regime, and particularly those that had significant resources and critical social responsibilities. Ever more patricians followed Lorenzo de' Medici's early example of joining key local brotherhoods like Florence's Company of the Blacks, and this certainly brought additional resources, patronage, and influence to some *conforterie*. It certainly proved the critical factor that helped the Bolognese recruit the local Senate in their effort, noted above, to repel the Capuchins' attempt to enter into the work in 1586. To the extent that ennobling also involved, bringing some high clerics into the brotherhood itself, it effectively reduced the extent to which the *conforteria* and the comforters could act as lay civic religious liturgists. As we also saw, clergy completely replaced laity in Naples' Company of the Whites in the same decade when the Bolognese *confratelli* were besting the Capuchins.

Yet, by the 16th century the communal and republican values that had underpinned traditional civic religion were also changing radically. Ennobling was altering the charitable activities and administrative forms of leading confraternities in part because these fulfilled the social priorities and bureaucratic needs of the territorial state. Brotherhoods with a significant social mandate, such as those that operated hospitals, orphanages, workhouses, and similar institutions, tended to become smaller and more narrow in their membership. Many devolved into closed corporations of elite insiders, or into quasi-governmental bureaucratic agencies that occupied the gray area between church and state in early modern absolutism. This was certainly the case with the Italian *conforterie*.

As the social standing of these brotherhoods rose through the early modern period, their aesthetic profile followed suit. The "devotional consumption" that marked baroque piety in the 17th century transformed the spaces, tools, and literature around comforting. An increasingly ennobled membership refashioned its churches and commissioned paintings from leading artists on familiar themes such as the life of John the Baptist or the deaths of the martyrs to decorate their confraternity spaces, turning them into spaces for public music

performances.³⁵ An 18th-century visitor to the chapel of the Company of the Whites in Naples claimed that it was simply not possible to find another as beautiful or as richly decorated. The contemporary cult of death only intensified and sometimes sexualised these aesthetics. While many emphasised skulls and skeletons, the clerical comforters of Naples, working within the hospital used to treat venereal disease, commissioned a wax bust of a young, lovely, and dead prostitute whose naked body was pockmarked by syphilitic sores.

Lay comforting of condemned prisoners by confraternities has been heavily studied by Italian scholars for the past four decades, but the subject remains relatively understudied in English language scholarship. The most recent work builds on the wealth of recent textual, art historical, musicological, and historical scholarship. It reaches to psychology and anthropology to ask what comforting might tell us about the interplay of senses in somaesthetic experience, about the criminal body as a ritual object, and about emotions of fear and hope as these are refracted through death and as they are expressed through poetry, art, and music.³⁶ Yet, we still know little about how gender shaped comforting, or about whether and how comforters dealt with those outside the Catholic faith. We might also ask whether the experience of working so directly with individual condemned men and women led Italy's ruling elite and its population generally to be the first in Europe to reject the morality, justice, and utility of capital punishment.

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PART 4

Confraternities in a Transcultural World



National Confraternities in Rome and Italy in the Late Middle Ages and Early Modern Period: Identity, Representation, Charity

Anna Esposito

1 Introduction

Ever since the late Middle Ages, Rome has been a cosmopolitan city, capital of a country and of Christianity. It is thus an exemplary case for the study of “national” confraternities that existed in various Italian cities, but which in Rome had an especially rich development complete with its own special characteristics.¹ This article will thus examine the Roman case. It will begin with a brief description of the city’s diverse population, underlining in particular the place and role of the foreign communities in Rome. It will then examine the origin of national confraternal organisations—often in connection with jubilee years; the role they played as points of reference for their fellow nationals (above all, for pilgrims, but also for permanent residents); the characteristics of these “national” institutions, and especially their efforts to maintain their language and their devotions to their national saints; the administration of their assets and income, both of which were essential for the delivery of their charitable and social services, many of which went to benefit pilgrim women. It will then end with some general considerations on future directions to follow in the study of foreign national groups and associations in Rome and elsewhere.

¹ Within the rich bibliography on the subject, see in particular the following recent publications: *Identità e rappresentazione. Le chiese nazionali a Roma, 1450–1650*, (eds.) Alexander Koller, Susanne Kubersky-Piredda, with the collaboration of Tobias Daniels (Rome: 2015); *Chiese e nationes a Roma: dalla Scandinavia ai Balcani (secc. xv–xviii). Atti del convegno internazionale, Roma 8 aprile 2016*, (eds.) Antal Molnár, Giovanni Pizzorusso, Matteo Sanfilippo, (Rome: 2017). See also: *Les fondations nationales dans la Rome pontificale* (Rome: 1981); Luigi Fiorani, “*Charità et pietate. Confraternite e gruppi devoti nella città rinascimentale e barocca*,” in *Roma, città del papa*, (eds.) Luigi Fiorani, Adriano Prosperi, in *Storia d'Italia. Annali* 16 (Turin: 2000), 429–476. Publications on specific national groups in Rome are too numerous to mention, but the reader might start with Egmont Lee, “Foreigners in Quattrocento Rome,” *Renaissance and Reformation*, n.s., 7 (1983) 135–146; some of the other publications will be mentioned in the pages that follow.

2 The Place of Foreigners in the Population of Rome

After a marked decline in the 14th century when the papacy moved to Avignon, the presence of both Italian and transalpine foreigners (*forenses*) in Rome picks up again with the return of the Curia in the early 1400s at the end of the Great Schism. It continues to grow well into the following century, suffering only a momentary pause in the wake of the Sack of Rome in 1527.² Not surprisingly, in 1581 Michel de Montaigne notes that Rome is “the most universal city in the world, a place where strangeness and differences of nationality are considered least; for by its nature it is a city pieced together out of foreigners; everyone is as if at home.”³ With these words Montaigne captured the composite nature of the city’s population, its internationalism, and its vocation to be (in the words of a recent scholar) a “plural” city.⁴

Rome’s demographic growth in the course of the previous century had been exceptional. At the end of the pontificate of Martin V (1431) the city had about 25–30,000 inhabitants; a hundred years later, when the first modern census was taken (the *Descriptio urbis* of 1526–27), the city’s population had doubled to 60,000; by the time Montaigne visited Rome, its population had grown to about 100,000.⁵ The demographic increase in the 15th century (especially in the second half) was primarily due to the influx of foreigners. In his attempt to categorise the various components of the Roman population, the humanist and chronicler Stefano Infessura (c.1435–c.1500) first listed native-born Roman citizens (*romani cives*) and then the members of the Curia, the working class (*popolo minuto*), and the foreigners (*alienigenae*).⁶ Both the Latin term *alienigenae* and the more frequently used term *forenses* referred to all those people who had not been born in Rome and included not only Italians from other regions of the peninsula but also people who had arrived from across the Alps or across the sea. These foreigners were usually described by Roman chroniclers in rather general terms, such as pilgrims and foreigners, though in the second

2 Anna Esposito, *Un'altra Roma. Minoranze nazionali e comunità ebraiche tra Medioevo e Rinascimento* (Rome: 1995); Anna Esposito, “Roma e i suoi abitanti,” in *Roma del Rinascimento*, (ed.) Antonio Pinelli (Rome: 2001), 3–47.

3 Michel De Montaigne, *Montaigne’s Travel Journal*, (ed.) and trans. D.M. Frame (San Francisco: 1983), 97. For Montaigne’s views on Rome, see Alessandro Serio, “Stranieri e cittadini a Roma tra medioevo ed età moderna (secoli XV–XVI),” in *Il Mediterraneo delle città: scambi, confronti, culture, rappresentazioni*, (ed.) Francesco Salvatori (Rome: 2008), 323–341.

4 Luigi Fiorani, Adriano Prosperi, “Una città ‘plurale,’” in *Roma, città del papa*, xxiii–xxxi.

5 Eugenio Sonnino, “Le anime dei romani: fonti religiose e demografia storica,” in *Roma, la città del papa*, 329–364, esp. 336, table 1.

6 Stefano Infessura, *Diario della città di Roma*, (ed.) Oreste Tommasini (Rome: 1890), 174.

half of the 15th century we do find more specific categories applied to them, such as Genoese, Florentine, Hungarian, and so forth. According to Egmont Lee, this awareness of foreign nationalities in Rome is due, in part, to the presence of confraternities of foreigners that placed their mark on the urban fabric of the city and developed ever richer relationships with the host community.⁷

While foreigners who settled in other Italian cities did so primarily for the very concrete opportunity to integrate themselves into the local society and its economy, both in commerce and finance, but also in other sectors of artisanal production, those who settled in Rome had other reasons for being there, all having to do with the particular nature of Rome. First and foremost, the Roman political system characterised by an elected monarchy used the spoils system to import elite personnel in the fields of administration, finance, commerce, the Curia, the College of Cardinals, and various specific religious orders whenever a new pope was elected.⁸ Another reason was the fact that Rome was a reference point for all who had business with the Curia, either for ecclesiastical, economic, or political reasons. Yet another was the undeniable appeal Rome had for all Christians. It is also evident that the needs of a rapidly growing city, which by the mid-15th century was capital of a state and home to a royal court, attracted large masses of specialised workers in all fields and stimulated commercial transactions especially in consumer goods.⁹

In the course of the 15th and early 16th centuries, the relative proportions of *forenses* in Rome changed in relation to the nationality of the reigning pope. One of the most consistent groups of *ultramontani* (as the Romans described those who came from outside the Italian peninsula) were the Spanish. The backbone of their community consisted of Catalans and Valencian merchants who were especially active in the wool and cloth trade.¹⁰ The Catalans were a significant group already at the time of Callixtus III Borgia (r. 1455–58), but became even more prominent during the pontificate of his nephew Alexander VI Borgia (r. 1492–1503). Composed of relatively stable elements, the Catalan

7 Egmont Lee, "Changing Views of Foreigners in Rome at the End of the Middle Ages," in *Cultura e società nell'Italia medievale. Studi per Paolo Brezzi* (Rome: 1988), 457–477: 458, 465.

8 Giovanni Pizzorusso, Matteo Sanfilippo, "Dalle frontiere dell'Europa cattolica alla Città Eterna: chiese nazionali e comunità straniere in età moderna," in *Chiese e nationes a Roma*, 225–242: 226.

9 See Luciano Palermo, "Espansione demografica e sviluppo economico a Roma nel Rinascimento," in *Popolazione e società a Roma dal Medioevo all'età contemporanea*, (ed.) Eugenio Sonnino (Rome: 1998), 319.

10 Manuel Vaquero Piñeiro, "La presencia de los españoles en la economía romana (2500–1527). Primeros datos de archivo," *En la España Medieval*, 16 (1993), 287–306.

community was the first “nation” in Rome to set up a commercial consulate in the city (late 1400s).¹¹ There was also a sizeable French community in Rome, many of whose members worked in the Curia, especially as notaries. The “German” community consisted mostly of skilled workers in various trades and professions coming mostly from central and northern Europe.¹² Already at the beginning of the 15th century the Germans were inn-keepers, hosts, bath-house operators, as well as bakers, shoemakers, and weavers, the latter so numerous that they were able to establish associations of exclusively of Germans.¹³ At the same time, there was also a significant number of “Germans” in the Curia, especially during the brief pontificate of Adrian VI Boeyens (r. 1522–23). They were also present in the Swiss guard, which recruited soldiers primarily from Swiss and German lands.¹⁴ Corsicans were an especially numerous group; in the early 16th century they constituted 4.8% of the entire population of Rome. They were mostly sailors, soldiers, servants, and cattlemen working for ecclesiastical institutions or aristocratic families.¹⁵ There were also immigrants from Dalmatia, Illyria, and Slavic lands from the interior of the Balkans; they generally worked in humbler trades, but also in commerce; many resided in the port area of Ripetta that was later renamed *Schiavonia*.¹⁶ Albanians and Greeks became ever more numerous starting in the later 15th century and then especially in the 16th as a result of Ottoman advances in those territories.¹⁷

- 11 The first reference to a Catalan consulate in Rome is dated 12 July 1484; see Manuel Vaqueró Piñeiro, “Mercaderes catalanes y valencianos en el Consulado de Roma,” in *Oligarquías políticas y elites económicas en las ciudades bajomedievales (siglos XIV–XVI)*, (ed.) Rafael Narbona, *Revista d'història medieval*, 9 (1998), 151–172: 159.
- 12 The terminology used to describe “Germans”—*tedesco*, *teutonicus*, *alemanus*—was both fluid and nebulous; it was applied to individuals coming not only from the various German-speaking countries north of the Alps, but also to individuals from countries further east, such as Hungary.
- 13 Knut Schulz, “Artigiani tedeschi in Italia,” in *Comunicazione e mobilità nel Medioevo. Incontri tra il Sud e il centro dell'Europa (secc. XI–XIV)*, (eds.) Siegfried de Rachewiltz, and Josef Riedmann (Bologna: 1996), 197–228.
- 14 Arnold Esch, *I mercenari svizzeri in Italia. L'esperienza delle guerre milanesi (1510–1515) tratte da fonti bernesi* (Verbania: 1999).
- 15 Anna Esposito, “Una minoranza e il suo insediamento: i corsi,” in Anna Esposito, *Un'altra Roma*, 93–106.
- 16 Umberto Gnoli, *Topografia e toponomastica di Roma medioevale e moderna* (Rome: 1939), 296.
- 17 A Greek college (*Collegio greco*) was founded in the 16th century to educate young Greek and Albanian exiles in the Catholic faith; see *Il collegio greco di Roma. Ricerche sugli alunni, la direzione, l'attività*, (ed.) Antonis Fyrigos (Rome: 1983); Cesare Santus, “Tra la chiesa di Sant'Anastasio e il Sant'Uffizio: note sulla presenza greca a Roma in età moderna,” in *Chiese e nationes a Roma*, 193–223.

The most important communities of foreigners from within the Italian peninsula were the Ligurians (especially the Genoese), the *padani* (from the Po valley), and the Tuscans. The Ligurians included sailors and merchants, but also important bankers in the service of the Curia.¹⁸ The *padani* were by far more numerous; the largest group among them were the Lombards.¹⁹ Already in the 15th century they were active in Rome as merchants, hosts and inn-keepers, in metal-works (as smiths, but also as armourers and sword-makers), and in construction. They were particularly important in the construction industry in the 16th century when a large number of building projects were opened.

Without a doubt, however, Tuscans constituted the most important Italian community, by far, in Rome. First among them were the Florentines. Documented in Rome already at the end of the 14th century as artisans and merchants, in the early part of the 15th century they became the merchant/bankers attached to the Curia (*Romanam Curiam sequentes*). They constituted an elite immigration and settled in the Ponte district where, in the 16th century, their national church, dedicated to St John the Baptist, would be built and where the major Florentine banking families, among which the Gaddi, Capponi, Strozzi, and Altoviti, would locate their banks. Already under the pontificate of Leo X de' Medici (r. 1513–21) the Florentine presence in Rome was consolidated by the establishment of a Florentine commercial consulate (1515), the elevation of their national church into a parish (1519), and the expansion of their “national” confraternities²⁰—all very important steps in the social and spiritual integration of the Tuscan community in Rome.²¹

Lastly, we must consider the presence of a transient population, which in Rome has always represented a significant portion of the inhabitants. Often, these transient individuals found a point of reference in the hospices run by members of their own *natio*. The transient group consisted of people from a great variety of social classes and occupations—ambassadors of foreign power, lawyers and attorneys for local aristocrats, churchmen on their visits

18 Among the bankers, the Sauli were especially important; see Andrea Fara, “Credito e cittadinanza: i Sauli, banchieri genovesi a Roma tra Quattro e Cinquecento,” *Reti Medievali Rivista* 17.1 (2016), 71–104.

19 Anna Esposito, “La comunità dei lombardi a Roma e le sue istituzioni (secc. xv–xvi),” in *Identità e rappresentazione*, 397–406.

20 Irene Polverini Fosi, “I fiorentini a Roma nel Cinquecento: storia di una presenza,” in *Roma capitale (1447–1527)*, (ed.) Sergio Gensini (Rome: 1994), 389–414.

21 On the privileged integration of the Florentine community in the Ponte district, see Claudia Conforti, “La ‘nazione fiorentina’ a Roma nel Rinascimento,” in *La città italiana e i luoghi degli stranieri. XIV–XVIII secolo*, (eds.) Donatella Calabi and Paola Lanaro (Rome: 1998), 171–191.

ad limina or in search of benefices, humanists and intellectuals with links to Roman cultural circles or the university (the *Studium Urbis*), workers and labourers who came to the city to find seasonal employment. And there were also pilgrims, who constituted an important element, not only numerically, but also economically and socially. All of these transient inhabitants made Rome a distinct from other Italian cities who welcomed foreigners in order, above all, to resolve demographic deficits or because they needed a more or less specialised work force.

3 “National” Confraternities in Rome

With this brief panorama on the non-native population of Rome in mind, it is now time to turn our attention to the many associations the immigrant population founded and ran in the city as early as the 14th century—confraternities, merchant corporations, consulates, and more. By the end of the 16th century, there were about fifty such associations of foreigners in Rome that played an important role in welcoming, assisting, and looking after the interests of people who, either as pilgrims, travellers, merchants, or artisans, found themselves living temporarily or permanently in Rome. As Alexander Koller and Susanne Kubersky-Piredda have pointed out, these organisations of foreigners were “centres that crystallised the multiple social, cultural, and religious components of the *nationes*.”²²

Already in the Early Middle Ages foreigners in Rome established *schole* to welcome their fellow countrymen. They did so near places of worship, first and foremost near the basilicas of St Peter at the Vatican and St John Lateran. During the High Middle Ages many of these *schole* underwent a crisis and were replaced by other sodalities that, especially after the Jubilee Year of 1300, began to appear in the city, sometime as a re-founding of older institutions, but often completely autonomous new ones. In fact, it was exactly the creation of the “holy year” that prompted the founding of new “national” hospices that could serve as a point of reference for pilgrims arriving from various parts of Europe. So, alongside the more traditional devotional confraternities already present in Rome, new ones sprung up that had a more “national” character, thereby enriching the spectrum of civic associations, and their respective hospices and hospitals, present in the city. It is these new, “national” confraternities, in particular, that, starting in the 14th century, made the Roman confraternal scene

22 “furono centri di cristallizzazione delle molteplici componenti sociali, culturali e religiose delle *nationes*.” Koller/Kubersky-Piredda, “Introduzione,” in *Identità e rappresentazione*, 8.

both new and exceptional when compared to that of other Italian and European urban centres.²³

Founded during jubilee years with the clearly intent of serving as reference points for their fellow countrymen—first and foremost pilgrims and travelers, but also those who had become permanent residents—national hospices were able to carry out charitable work very efficiently and thus satisfy their organisation's goals.²⁴ In some cases, their date of foundation coincides with a jubilee year, as in the case with Santa Maria dell'Anima dei Tedeschi, founded precisely in the jubilee year 1390,²⁵ or the Castilian hospice next to the church of San Giacomo in Piazza Navona, created in the jubilee year 1450. When official records do not give a year of foundation, a confraternity's own tradition will claim that it was founded in a jubilee year in response to a perceived need.²⁶ Such is the case with the hospice of Saint Thomas of Canterbury managed by the *Universitas Anglicorum*; its records claim that the institution was founded in 1361 in response to incidents suffered by English pilgrims who had come to Rome for the previous year's jubilee and, not finding a support base, had fallen prey to the Roman underworld.²⁷

These new hospices were, for the most part, located in central districts and on major roads, and no longer next to the most famous places of worship, as had been the case with the *schole*. Others, however, appeared in more peripheral areas that had not yet been urbanised and thus contributed to that area's development. The case in point is the district of Campo Marzio: the erection of places of worship, confraternities, national hospices and hospitals in

23 Anna Esposito, "Le strutture assistenziali romane nel tardo medioevo tra iniziativa laicale e politica pontificia," in *Roma medievale. Aggiornamenti*, (ed.) Paolo Delogu (Florence: 1998), 289–301.

24 For an overview, now somewhat dated, of national confraternities in Rome, see Oreste Ferdinando Tencajoli, *Le chiese nazionali italiane in Roma* (Rome: 1928); Luigi Salerno, *Roma communis patria* (Bologna: 1968); and *Le chiese nazionali a Roma*, (ed.) Carlo Sabatini (Rome: 1979).

25 Tobias Daniels, "La chiesa di Santa Maria dell'Anima tra Papato e Impero (secoli xv–xvii)," in *Chiese e nationes a Roma*, 77–95: 81.

26 Anna Esposito, "Confraternite e anni santi fino al 1500," in *Roma sancta. La città delle basiliche*, (eds.) Marcello Fagiolo and Maria Luisa Madonna (Rome: 1985), 81–84. For Santa Maria dell'Anima dei Tedeschi see Clifford W. Maas, *The German Community in Renaissance Rome. 1378–1523* (Rome: 1981). For San Giacomo degli Spagnoli see Manuel Vaquero Piñero, "L'ospedale della nazione castigliana in Roma tra Medioevo ed Età contemporanea," *Roma moderna e contemporanea* 1 (1993), 57–81.

27 Bernard Linares, "The Origin and the Foundation of the English Hospice," in *The English Hospice in Rome*, (ed.) The Venerable English College (Rome: 2012), 15–42; Matteo Binasco, "Le comunità anglo-celtiche nella Roma del xvi e xvii secolo," in *Chiese e nationes a Roma*, 37–48.

run-down areas of the district spurred significant urban and social renewal in the area by “favouring the creation around these places of worship of a less run-down urban nucleus and the permanent settlement of a population with which to establish solid links of socio-religious solidarity.”²⁸ Such a population was constituted, to a great extent, by immigrants. This process, especially evident in the area around Augustus’s Mausoleum and the port of Ripetta, had first started in the mid-15th century with the arrival and settlement in the area of a colony of Dalmatians, Croatians, and Bosnians that then grew in numbers with the arrival of refugees from Ottoman advances along the Balkans. Pope Nicholas v Parentucelli (1447–1455) granted them a church, subsequently known as San Girolamo degli Schiavoni (St Jerome of the Slavs), and an adjacent hospital.²⁹ In 1471, Pope Sixtus IV Della Rovere (1471–1484) granted the nearly ruined church of San Nicola del Toffo in Campo Marzio to the Lombard community so that they might establish their national church and hospice there.³⁰

Popes favoured the process of juridical formalisation of these institutions, as did Venice and other cities, so as to encourage the settlement and integration of immigrants and also in order to create a greater sense of security, social peace, and public good in the city. In fact, as Ermanno Orlando has observed, “only in the context of the group, understood as a social body more or less juridically structured [...] and in some way institutionalised, did immigrants lose their intrinsic characteristics of eccentricity and imperfection [...] and found

28 “a favorire la nascita attorno agli edifici di culto di un aggregato urbanistico meno degradato e a favorire l’insediamento stabile di una popolazione con la quale creare solidi vincoli di solidarietà socio-religiosa”; Manuel Vaquero Piñeiro, “Costruttori lombardi nell’edilizia privata romana del XVI secolo,” *Mélanges de l’École française de Rome. Italie et Méditerranée*, 119.2 (2007), 341–612: 353.

29 On San Girolamo degli Schiavoni and its church see: Giorgio Magjerec, *Istituto di S. Girolamo degli Illirici, 1453–1693* (Rome: 1953); Giorgio Kokša, *San Girolamo degli Schiavoni (chiesa nazionale croata)* (Rome: 1971); Jasenka Gudelj, “The Hospital and Church of the Schiavoni / Illyrian Confraternity in Early Modern Rome,” *Confraternitas* 27.1–2 (2016), 5–29.

30 See Esposito, “La comunità dei lombardi,” 400. The church was completely rebuilt in the 17th century and renamed in honour of saints Ambrose and Charles Borromeo; it is still the church of the Lombard community in Rome. In the first decades after the foundation, there are no Lombard names to be found among the donors, even though there were many Lombards in the city at that time; see Ivana Ait, “La dogana di terra come fonte per lo studio della presenza di mercanti stranieri a Roma nel XV secolo,” in *Forestieri e stranieri nelle città basso medievali. Atti del seminario internazionale di studio, Bagno a Ripoli, 4–8 giugno 1984* (Florence: 1988), 29–43. For the presence in Rome of Milanese and Bergamasque merchants, see Arnold Esch, *Economia, cultura materiale ed arte nella Roma del Rinascimento. Studi sui registri doganali romani 1445–1485* (Rome: 2007), 73, 136ff.

their functional place within the society that received them.”³¹ This worked at various levels: it responded to the needs of a city undergoing a marked demographic growth thanks, mostly, to immigration and therefore in need of social assistance facilities for those who had recently arrived; it painted a picture of efficiency that encouraged pilgrims to travel to Rome, and not only in jubilee years; and it responded to the need for public order and social control. Lastly, official recognition and the concession of privileges to national confraternities was part of the dialectics of diplomacy that the Holy See maintained with various European powers.

4 Characteristics of “National” Confraternities in Rome

In considering organised foreign associations in Rome, one invariably raises the question of “national identity.”³² As Alexander Koller and Susanne Kubersky-Piredda have recently pointed out, “the idea of nation as a political collective and the subsequent nexus between Nation and State are essentially modern phenomena. [...] On the other hand, the concept of *natio* as a group of people who share a set of cultural characteristics such as language, customs, habits, and traditions can be traced back to Antiquity. In the Middle Ages the term spread into university, mercantile, and diplomatic circles to indicate groups of people with a common origin.”³³ Research carried out so far on Rome (as well as on Venice) clearly reveals that national identity is an element that is both historical and relative.³⁴ There is no model to be advanced because every institution presents its own particular history even from the perspective of where, or to what, it belongs. Recent historiography has, in fact, highlighted “the great fluidity of identifying elements on which the feeling of belonging to a specific national community was based” because “the territories of provenance were

31 “solo in un contesto di gruppo, inteso quale corpo sociale (più o meno) giuridicamente strutturato [...] e in qualche modo istituzionalizzato, l'immigrato perdeva i suoi caratteri intrinseci di eccentricità e imperfezione [...] trovando una sua collocazione funzionale all'interno della società di ricezione”; Ermanno Orlando, *Migrazioni mediterranee. Migranti, minoranze e matrimoni a Venezia nel basso medioevo* (Bologna: 2014), 73, 163–165.

32 Adriano Prosperi, *L'identità. L'altra faccia della storia* (Rome: 2016).

33 “l'idea di nazione come collettivo politico e il consequenziale nesso tra Nazione e Stato sono fenomeni essenzialmente moderni. [...] Viceversa il concetto di *natio* come insieme di persone che condividono caratteristiche culturali quali lingua, costumi, usanze e tradizioni può essere ricondotto già all'epoca antica. Nel medioevo il termine si diffuse in ambito universitario, mercantile e diplomatico per designare gruppi di persone di comune provenienza”; Koller/Kubersky-Piredda, “Introduzione,” 8.

34 Pizzorusso/Sanfilippo, “Dalle frontiere dell'Europa cattolica,” 237–238.

heterogeneous and so were the groups of foreigners, often animated by very diverse objectives when it came to their stay in Rome.”³⁵

At the same time, a survey of notarial documents has revealed the rapid spread of the term *natio* among the hospitals run by foreigners in Rome from the 14th century. The survey also established “how, under the common term *natio*, there are various meanings. Around 1500 the term is used, above all, to indicate a distinction by language; but just as often it is used to underline other distinguishing factors such as territorial districts of a historical, political, or ecclesiastical nature, geo-morphological structures, social factors, etc.”³⁶ For example, the Flemish constituted a nebula whose borders were difficult to establish since Flanders itself was a very diverse crossroads of national, linguistic, and cultural identities where each single city constituted a different homeland. This did not, however, prevent the establishment in Rome of a Flemish *natio* with its own hospice and church near the modern Piazza Argentina. Around 1444 the Flemish community in Rome founded a confraternity under the patronage of Saint Julian the Hospitaller,³⁷ even as many sizeable groups of Flemish continued to be enrolled in the German confraternity of Santa Maria della Pietà in Campo Santo dei Teutonici e Fiamminghi. The Flemish confraternity of San Giuliano was one of the associations with links to the lay and clerical staff at the Curia, where the Flemish component, according to Maurice Vaes, was rather numerous.³⁸

One must also not forget the variety of interests, both individual and collective, that tied the members of these associations to well defined social, professional, or other groups. Such is the case with the Lombards in Rome. In 1471, on

35 “la grande fluidità degli elementi identitari sui quali si basava il sentimento di appartenenza a una determinata comunità nazionale [in quanto] eterogenei erano i territori di provenienza ed eterogenei erano i gruppi di stranieri, spesso animati da obbiettivi diversissimi per quanto riguardava la loro permanenza a Roma”; Koller/Kubersky-Piredda, “Introduzione,” 9.

36 “come sotto il comune denominatore *natio* si profilano così assai significati. Attorno al 1500 il termine è utilizzato soprattutto per rimarcare una distinzione di tipo linguistico; ma altrettanto frequenti sono i casi in cui è usato per sottolineare altri criteri distintivi, come le circoscrizioni territoriali di stampo storico-politico-ecclesiastico, assetti geomorfologici, fattori sociali etc.”; Andreas Rehberg, “Le comunità ‘nazionali’ e le loro chiese nella documentazione dei notai stranieri (1507–1527),” in *Identità e rappresentazione*, 213.

37 Maurice Vaes, “Hospice de Saint Julien des Flamands à Rome. Les statuts de 1444,” *Annales de la société d’émulation de Bruges*, 76 (1924), 65–96; Karl Rudolf, “Santa Maria dell’Anima, il Campo Santo dei Teutonici e Fiamminghi e la questione delle nazioni,” *Bulletin de l’Institut Historique Belge*, 50 (1980), 75–92.

38 Johan Ickx, *San Giuliano dei Fiamminghi a Roma in età moderna: legami e limiti di una natio*, in *Chiese e nationes a Roma*, 65–76. See also Johan Ickx, Marco Pizzo, *Chiesa e Fondazione reale belga «San Giuliano dei Fiamminghi» a Roma* (Rome: 2016).

the basis of their large number in the city, the Lombards obtained the approval of Pope Sixtus IV for the creation of their own confraternity and hospital by the name of Sant'Ambrogio dei Lombardi, an institution that was to become ever more important at the turn of the 15th and 16th centuries.³⁹ Their members did not all come from the Duchy of Milan, yet even from the beginning they saw themselves as part of a "Lombard" community in Rome. What is also noteworthy about this group is the significant number of different institutions they founded or in which they predominated to the point that, in the course of the 16th century, some of these institutions became alternate "national" confraternities of Lombards to Sant'Ambrogio.⁴⁰ Lombards in Rome founded chapels, churches, pious organisations, but also trade guilds (for example, the guild of Lombard bakers that in 1483 was meeting in the church of Sant'Agostino,⁴¹ or the association of Lombard wine-makers that in 1511 owned a chapel in the church of San Rocco).⁴²

There could also be more than one confraternity within a single national community. This could be the result of linguistic or parochial factors tied to the regional or political provenance of the people in that larger community. We see this in the larger groups of foreigners in Rome where different regional sub-groups founded their own churches and confraternities.

The founding of diverse smaller confraternities within the larger Franco-phone community in Rome illustrates the convergence of linguistic and political factors. In the early modern period there were still independent political units on the periphery of the French monarchy, such as the Duchy of Brittany. Already in the mid-15th century the Breton community in Rome had founded their own church, Sant'Ivo dei Bretoni, in the district of Campo Marzio.⁴³ At about the same time, the *natio gallicana* established itself in the area where they would later build their church, San Luigi dei Francesi.⁴⁴ Their confraternity of the Concezione della Vergine e santi Dionigio e Luigi, was approved by

39 Anna Esposito, "La comunità dei lombardi a Roma e le sue istituzioni (secc. xv–xvi)," in *Identità e rappresentazione*, 397–406.

40 Esposito, "La comunità dei lombardi," 405–406.

41 Archivio di Stato di Roma, S. Agostino, reg. 107, *introitus*, fols. 33v, 58v, 68.

42 Paola Canofeni, "La confraternita di S. Rocco: origine e primi anni," *Archivio della Società Romana di Storia Patria*, 109 (1986), 57–86: 71. Its chapel was dedicated to saints Simon and Jude.

43 Rehberg, "Le comunità nazionali," 213–214.

44 Given the lack of an up-to-date and complete treatment of French foundations in Rome, the information that follows is drawn from Pierre La Croix, *Mémoire historique sur les institutions de la France à Rome*, Rome 1868, 2nd ed., (ed.) Jean Arnaud (Rome: 1892). For the church, see Sebastiano Roberto, *San Luigi dei Francesi. La fabbrica di una chiesa nazionale nella Roma del '500* (Rome: 2005).

Pope Sixtus IV in 1478; it consisted mostly of laymen working at the Curia and clergy. Francophones in Rome had a third alternative: in 1473 the confraternity of Santa Maria della Purificazione dei Transalpini was founded and given the church of Santa Maria in Banchi; it would later be known as “of the Four Nations (‘delle Quattro Nazioni’) because its members, for the most part artisans, came from France, Burgundy, Lorraine, and Savoy.”⁴⁵

The Iberian group was also an conglomeration of subgroups comprised of people from various *nationes* who did not always see each other—or were seen by others—as part of a common “Spanish” entity. The kingdoms of Castile and of Aragon remained two very distinct units even after their union in 1497. From the end of the 14th century, the subjects of the Crown of Aragon, that is to say the Catalans, Aragonese, and Valencians in Rome, had as their point of reference the church and hospice of Santa Maria in Monserrato and, from 1506, the confraternity by the same name. Starting in 1450, the subject of the Crown of Castile had their own separate church and hospice, San Giacomo degli Spagnoli in Piazza Navona.⁴⁶ The two groups remained active until the 19th century, but never developed a special relation nor ever found the need to join into a single association. Manuel Vaquero Piñeiro points out that “their difference was not a simple case of ‘parochialism’ [...] but was the logical result of a substantial duality, profoundly felt and defenced, a reflection of the primary identity of the two national communities that supported them (Castilian and Catalan-Aragonese).”⁴⁷ He then points out that, while members of the two communities did maintain personal contacts and relationships, nonetheless under the label “Spanish nation” one “must always identify two separate collectivities that did not miss any opportunity to point out their diversity.”⁴⁸

45 François-Charles Uginet, “L’idée de ‘natio gallicana’ et la fin de la presence savoisiennne dans l’église nationale de Saint-Louis à Rome,” in *Les fondations nationales*, 83–99.

46 On the presence of Iberians and their foundations in Rome during the early modern period, see Manuel Vaquero Piñeiro, “Una realtà nazionale composita: comunità e chiese ‘spagnole’ a Roma,” in *Roma capitale (1447–1527)*, (ed.) Sergio Gensini (Pisa: 1994), 473–491; Alessandro Serio, “Modi, tempi, uomini della presenza hispana a Roma tra la fine del Quattrocento e il primo Cinquecento (1492–1527),” in *L’Italia di Carlo V. Guerra, religione e politica nel primo Cinquecento*, (eds.) Francesca Cantù, Maria Antonietta Visceglia (Rome: 2003), 433–476: 441–444 on the confraternity of Santa Maria di Montserrat and the Curia; 445–447 on the confraternity of San Giacomo degli Spagnoli.

47 “la loro diversità non era dovuta ad una semplice questione di ‘campanilismo’ [...] ma era il risultato logico di una dualità sostanziale, profondamente sentita e difesa, riflesso della identità precipua delle due comunità nazionali che le sostenevano (quella castigliana e quella catalano-aragonese).” Vaquero Piñeiro, “Una realtà nazionale composita,” 476.

48 “bisogna identificare sempre due collettività separate che non perdevano occasione per sottolineare la loro diversità”; Vaquero Piñeiro, “Una realtà nazionale composita,” 476.

As various national communities planted roots in Rome, their relative institutions—especially for the more significant and numerous groups—came to be seen as representatives of the entire national group. In fact, national hospices often became a reference point, even as regards to hospitality, for procurators, ambassadors, clergymen, all temporarily in Rome to seek benefices and prebends from the pope, to deal with problems related to their diocese at home, or to discuss political or financial questions on behalf of their governments. Their functioning as diplomatic offices became even more significant the moment their management fell directly under the control of the highest authorities of the countries they represented, as was the case with San Luigi dei Francesi and King Louis XI⁴⁹ or Santa Maria in Monserrato degli Aragonesi, Catalani e Valenziani with King Ferdinand II.⁵⁰ During the course of the 16th century rulers continued to appropriate the collective identity of their expatriate communities in Rome and tie the community's national institutions to the crown.⁵¹

Another element, which at times is connected with the previous case and can be found in many national communities, is the diversification of associations on the basis of the social status of members. Research on some communities of foreigners has raised questions about the cohesion and solidarity present in these groups. Such is the case with the Florentines, who at first (starting in 1448) were united in a single confraternity, the Compagnia della Pietà di San Giovanni Battista, with a well-structured social composition, but then (already at the end of the 15th century) were divided into two confraternities, that of the Pietà and that of San Giovanni Battista Decollato. The first, heir to the earlier confraternity of the Pietà, became the representative, above all, of the Florentine commercial community that had assumed control of it. Even the pope considered the Pietà as “the only institutionalised national collective expression recognised by Rome and Florence,”⁵² alongside the Florentine

49 On Louis XI and the confraternity of San Luigi dei Francesi see Joseph Combet, *Louis XI et le Saint-Siège (1461–1483)* (Paris: 1903).

50 Justo Fernández Alonso, *S. Maria di Monserrato* (Rome: 1968). In the case of the numerous German community, the imperial government intervened in the affairs of the confraternity of Santa Maria dell'Anima only on specific occasions, but the hospice did not become the home of a fixed embassy until the mid-18th century; see Elisabeth Garms, “Scene e attori della rappresentanza imperiale a Roma nell'ultimo Seicento,” in *La Corte di Roma tra Cinque e Seicento. “Teatro” della politica europea*, (eds.) Gianvittorio Signorotto, Maria Antonietta Visceglia (Rome: 1998), 509–535; Daniels, “La chiesa di Santa Maria dell'Anima,” 83.

51 Koller, Kubersky-Piredda, “Introduzione,” 11.

52 Irene Polverini Fosi, “Pietà, devozione e politica: due confraternite fiorentine nella Roma del Rinascimento,” *Archivio Storico Italiano*, vol. 149, no. 547 (1991), I, 119–161: 131.

commercial consulate that, starting in 1515, gathered the most prominent merchant-bankers in the community and received many privileges from Pope Leo x de' Medici, including permission of build the Florentine national church in Rome.⁵³ The other confraternity, San Giovanni Battista Decollato, was instead characterised by greater openness in the recruitment of members, who were, for the most part, artisans and small merchants/shop keepers.

The two Spanish confraternities, Santa Maria in Monserrato and San Giacomo degli Spagnoli, were also correspondingly different. The first was favoured by artisans and, above all, by merchants who, not surprisingly, were part of the Catalan consulate. The second was dominated by clergymen and employees of the Curia, with the laity very much in a minority position and with a subordinate role in the association.⁵⁴ The situation with the two German confraternities of Santa Maria dell'Anima and of the Campo Santo Teutonico, was even more exemplary and requires a more detailed examination, also because the other types of corporations that were associated with them.

The hospice of Santa Maria dell'Anima began to operate in Rome at the end of the 14th century when the Dutchman Giovanni di Pietro di Dordrecht and his wife Caterina made three small houses in the district of Parione available as a welcoming centre for pilgrims from north-central Europe arriving in Rome for the Holy Year proclaimed by Pope Boniface IX in 1390 and subsequently extended to 1399.⁵⁵ In 1406 Dietrich of Nieheim (c.1345–1418), a historian working at the Curia, founded a second hospice by that name, “the newly founded [hospital] of Blessed Mary of the Germans” (*Beate Marie Alamannorum noviter fundatum*), which Pope Innocent VII (r. 1404–06) immediately placed under the protection of the Holy See.⁵⁶ In the years that followed, this second institution

53 “la sola espressione collettiva nazionale istituzionalizzata e riconosciuta, sia da Roma che dalla madrepatria”; Irene Polverini Fosi, “Il consolato fiorentino a Roma e il progetto per la chiesa nazionale,” *Studi Romani*, 37 (1989), 50–70. The pope purposely connected the secular association of the consulate with the religious confraternity of the Pietà so as to give the church a clear political and dynastic mould; see Maurizia Cicconi, “Costruire l'identità: la fabbrica di San Giovanni dei Fiorentini tra il 1508 e gli anni del pontificato di Leone x,” in *Identità e rappresentazione*, 327–355.

54 Vaquero Piñeiro, “Una realtà nazionale composita,” 481, 485, 487.

55 In 1399 Pope Boniface IX issued a bull in which he referred to the institute's first activities, that is, the founding of a *solenne hospitale* to welcome members of the *Alemanna* nation. On Boniface IX, his jubilee year, and Rome in his time, see Arnold Esch, *Bonifaz IX. und der Kirchenstaat* (Tübingen: 1969).

56 Christiane Schuchard, “Das päpstliche Exemptionsprivileg für das Anima-Hospital vom 21. Mai 1406. Beobachtungen zur Geschichte der Anima im 15. Jahrhundert,” in *S. Maria dell'Anima. Zur Geschichte einer “deutschen” Stiftung in Rom*, (ed.) Michael Matheus (Berlin: 2010), 1–20.

was supported by a growing number of curials, artisans, and merchants from north-central Europe (not only Germans, but also Flemish, Belgians, and Dutch, some of whom also joined the confraternity of San Giuliano dei Fiamminghi).⁵⁷ There were also a number of curials and rich clergymen who, while furthering the institutional role of Santa Maria dell'Anima, effectively came to control the confraternity by eliminating all competitors and becoming its sole active members. In fact, from among the hundreds if not thousands of *teutoni* of diverse social extractions who visited the Anima during the jubilee years 1450, 1475, and 1500, few were encouraged to join the confraternity and then only the wealthiest, who subsequently were prodigal in their donations to the church and the hospice.⁵⁸ In 1431 the hospice of the Anima was fused with another German institution, the hospital of Sant'Andrea e San Niccolò, which had been founded in 1372 by the German chaplain of San Lorenzo in Panisperna, Nicolò *Henrici* from Kulm, with the assistance of Andrea Alani from Wales as a shelter for poor German women.⁵⁹

These were not, however, the only Teutonic foundations in Rome. In the 14th century some Germans, who remained anonymous, erected a chapel and hospital near the Campo Santo, or cemetery, behind the Basilica of Saint Peter. During the jubilee year 1450, a confraternity (named *Confraternitas Campi Sancti de Urbe*) was established to look after the hospice. Its members came predominantly from the middle class (artisans, technicians, labourers, small shop-keepers/merchants, etc.).⁶⁰ The spectrum of Teutonic associations in Rome was rounded off by various confraternities of artisans, for the most part German, but also Dutch-Flemish. The most well attended, from the start of the 15th century, were the confraternities of the bakers (dedicated to Saint Elizabeth), of the shoemakers (dedicated to Saints Crispin and Crispinian), and of weavers (about which we know very little). In so doing, the German community in Rome was reproducing organisational structures already established

57 Johan Ickx, *San Giuliano dei Fiamminghi a Roma in età moderna: legami e limiti di una natio*, in *Chiese e nationes a Roma*, 65–76.

58 Luciano Palermo, "Il patrimonio immobiliare, la rendita e le finanze di S. Maria dell'Anima nel Rinascimento," in *S. Maria dell'Anima*, 279–327: 280–286.

59 For the founding and life of the hospice of Sant'Andrea, see Paul Barbée, "Von deutscher Nationalgeschichte zu römischer Lokalgeschichte. Der Topos von 'nationalen Pilgerheim' am Beispiel des deutschen Frauenhospizes St. Andreas in Rom (1372–1431)," *Römische Quartalschrift*, 86 (1991), 23–52; Anna Esposito, "Le donne dell' Anima." Ospizi e "case sante" per le *mulieres theutonice* di Roma (secc. xv–inizi xvi), in *S. Maria dell'Anima*, 249–278: 249–260.

60 Knut Schulz, *Confraternitas Campi Sancti de Urbe. Die ältesten Mitgliederverzeichnisse (1500/01–1536) und Statuten der Bruderschaft* (Freiburg: 2002), 154–165, which includes the text of the statutes (in German and Latin) dated to about 1490.

by German artisans in other Italian cities not only to assist fellow members, but also to collaborate exclusively with fellow Germans.⁶¹ As Lorenz Böniger has pointed out, in the mid-15th century there seems to be a sort of network of German cobblers, some even itinerant, that connected “all major cities in the peninsula and ensured a first welcome for all itinerant artisans heading south as far as Rome.”⁶² According to Böniger, the statutes of the German cobblers in Venice (dated 1383) must have served as the direct model for an entire series of statutes for similar confraternities such as the ones in Vicenza (1432), Rome (1439), Treviso (1439/1440), Florence (1448), Udine (1449/1450), and Trent (1483), as well as for confraternities of bakers in Naples (1446) and Rome (pre-1477).⁶³

What has been presented so far should not give the impression of a closed world all turned inward upon itself. In fact, national foundations in Rome—and especially the more important ones such as Santa Maria dell’Anima dei Tedeschi, San Giovanni dei Fiorentini, the Catalan confraternity of Santa Maria in Monserrato, and the Castilian confraternity of San Giacomo—did much more than simply welcome and assist their fellow countrymen; they also provided a concrete “new function as vehicles of integration and advancement in Roman society, as access points for a circle of privileged contacts in the papal curia and at the courts of cardinals and nobles” that allowed their members to garner prestige and reputation in the city.⁶⁴

61 Knut Schulz, “Deutsche Handwerkergruppen in Rom der Renaissance,” *Römische Quartalschrift*, 86, 1–2 (1991), 3–22; e soprattutto Knut Schulz, Christiane Schuchard, *Handwerker deutscher Herkunft und ihre Bruderschaften im Rom der Renaissance. Darstellung und ausgewählte Quellen* (Rome: 2005). For the bakers, see 51–78 and 373–398 (statutes in German and Latin); for cobblers 79–100 e 399–419 (statutes in Latin with rubrics in German, as well). The latter were edited by Anna Osbat, “Lo statuto della confraternita dei SS. Crispino e Crispiniano dei calzolari tedeschi. Introduzione e testo,” *Confraternitas*, 12, nr. 2 (Fall 2001), 3–33.

62 “tutte le maggiori città della penisola ed assicurava una prima accoglienza a tutti gli artigiani itineranti in direzione sud fino a Roma”; *La “Regula” bilingue della scuola dei calzolari tedeschi a Venezia del 1383*, (ed.) Lorenz Böniger (Venice: 2002), xxi; see also, xix–xxv.

63 Lorenz Böniger, “Le comunità tedesche in Italia: problemi di comprensione linguistica e di inserimento,” in *Comunicare nel Medioevo. La conoscenza e l’uso delle lingue nei secoli XII–XV. Atti del convegno di studio svoltosi in occasione della XXV edizione del Premio internazionale Ascoli Piceno, Ascoli Piceno 28–30 novembre 2013*, (eds.) Isa Lori Sanfilippo and Giuliano Pinto (Rome: 2015), 147–160: 151.

64 “anche una nuova funzione di veicolo di inserimento e promozione nella società romana, di accesso ad un circolo di contatti privilegiati nel mondo della curia papale e delle corti cardinalizie e nobiliari”; Serio, “Modi, tempi, uomini,” 447.

5 Other Identifying Characteristics: Language, Feasts

Aside from erecting chapels and “national” churches that in the course of the 16th century became ever more imposing, a sort of competition among the various nations to see who could top the other in splendour and grandeur,⁶⁵ another identifying characteristic these national institutions sought to preserve among their members was the use of their native language. German-speakers seem especially sensitive to the language question, and not only in Rome. Confraternities of Germans insisted that their members speak German. The statutes of the confraternity of the Campo Santo Teutonico required members to speak German with each other and that the hired chaplain be someone who knew how to speak German well (*qui lingua alamannicam bene sciat loqui*).⁶⁶ The same was true for German confraternities of bakers or of cobblers. Especially the latter, who came from a very vast area of modern-day Germany, were expected to adhere to the rule of *naturaliter teutonizzare*, that is, to speak their native German, regardless of whether it be high or low German.⁶⁷

The same held true for other confraternities of transalpsines, such as the Flemish of San Giuliano, the Catalans, and the Castilians.⁶⁸ It is also not fortuitous that a common language was a factor in the founding of various “French” confraternities.⁶⁹ So, even against the background of an albeit slow assimilation, linguistic included, into the host society (an indispensable requirement for full integration),⁷⁰ it is not surprising to see that confraternities tended to foster the maintenance of the mother tongue among their members as one of the most immediate social markers of membership, and this, in turn, resulted in encouraging bilingualism among the members.⁷¹

Devotion to national saints (often elected as patrons of the association) and to national cult images was another factor that reinforced the feeling belonging. It is thus not a coincidence that confraternity statutes sometime contain special rubrics on the ceremonies to be observed on these feast-days, as they also did for the major liturgical feasts. In fact, national confraternities competed with each other in mounting splendid celebrations of their patron saints and sought to engage not only their members, but the all citizens in them. The confraternity of the Pietà dei Fiorentini, for example, mobilised itself for

65 Many articles in *Identità e rappresentazione* deal exactly with this.

66 Mass, *German Community*, 117; Lee, “Changing Views of Foreigners,” 471.

67 Schulz, “Artigiani tedeschi in Italia,” 215.

68 Serio, “Modi, tempi, uomini,” 471.

69 Uginet, “L’idée de ‘natio gallicana,’” 85–89.

70 Lee, “Changing Views of Foreigners,” 471–472.

71 Orlando, *Migrazioni mediterranee*, 451–455.

the feast-day of St John the Baptist (24 June) so as to make the event always more spectacular. The statutes of 1456 required only to the election of four *festaioli* (masters of festivities) responsible for decorating the church and order the wax and anything else that was necessary for the festivity;⁷² just three decades later a letter sent to the young Bernardo Dovizi da Bibbiena in 1490 reveals that by the celebrations had grown so much that they had expanded into the wide space in front of the church and included *spiritelli* (men on stilts), *edifici* (carts with various scenes on them), and *la girandola* (Catherine wheel or pinwheel fireworks),⁷³ all elements present in the St John's day celebrations in Florence.

6 Social Assistance and Sources of Income

The core of the activities of national confraternities in Rome, as elsewhere, consisted in organizing the community's religious life, fostering mutual assistance among members, and helping fellow countrymen in the difficult moments when they first arrived in the city by hosting them in the confraternity hospice. Since lack of a hospice was seen as a deficiency, especially when compared to other "nations," by the end of the 15th century even the smallest communities of foreigners had one; for example, the small group of Albanians in Rome set up and managed a *hospitalis Albanensium* in the suburban district of Monti, where many of them had settled.⁷⁴

Pilgrims were provided with some hospitality (normally three days), care for the ill, various chaplains and priests who spoke their language and could offer spiritual assistance, burial for those who died while on pilgrimage far from home. We do not have much information on the capacity of these "national" hospices in the 15th century, but we do know that it varied greatly from nation to nation and over time. The trend, however, was to increase the number of beds and hospital equipment, as contemporary inventories indicate. The Castilian nation, for example, managed the hospital of San Giacomo in Piazza Navona that, in the early 16th century, could house at least 68 men; it also ran two small facilities for women that could accommodate a maximum of twenty.⁷⁵ There is little documentation on the actual number of pilgrims

72 "che abbino a parare la chiesa e ordinare la cera e quello che fa di bisogno"; Rome, Archivio di S. Giovanni Battista dei Fiorentini, vol. 344, Chapt. xvii.

73 Fabrizio Cruciani, *Teatro nel Rinascimento. Roma 1450-1550* (Rome: 1983), 209.

74 Anna Esposito, "Le *nationes* difficili. Albanesi e corsi a Roma nel primo XVI secolo e le loro chiese nazionali," in *Chiese e nationes a Roma*, 161-174.

75 Vaquero Piñeiro, "L'ospedale della nazione castigliana," 58-61, 66-67.

housed in these hospices, but it is possible to get an idea from the hospice of San Tommaso degli Inglesi: between 1504 and 1507 (which were not even jubilee years), the hospice welcomed 489 people.⁷⁶ It was thus completely natural for the hospital/hospice to become the first point of reference for the majority of immigrants and visitors to the city, so much so that often such hospices were often established even before the national church was erected. Their management quickly became the major activity of confraternity brothers, while matters of daily assistance and responsibility for movable goods were placed in the hands of hired personnel, both male and female.

One should note the special attention foreign institutions (especially transalpine ones) paid to providing care for pilgrim women. Foreign women often found themselves alone and without support or resources, no longer able to return home, and in need of assistance and housing, sometime for a long time. Starting in the mid-14th century, but more so in the 15th, every *natio* set up a hospice/hospital for pilgrim women run by *mulieres religiose*, *pinzochere*, or tertiaries and supported by lay benefactors and/or state agencies. The Swedish hospice, for example, was founded by Saint Brigid of Sweden (1303–73) who arrived in Rome in 1349 in time for the jubilee of 1350. The hospice of Sant'Andrea e di San Niccolò for transalpine women was attached to the women's dormitory in the hospital of Santa Maria dell'Anima dei Tedeschi and was known as *lo spitale delle todesche* (the hospital of the German women). Castilian women could find accommodations in the two small hospices run by the confraternity of San Giacomo degli Spagnoli, one at the foot of Aracoeli, the other near Santa Maria della Pace in the area of Piazza Navona (in 1496 the latter was closed down and annexed to the former).⁷⁷ Slavic women in need could count of a hospice next to the church of San Marco that was erected after 1479 thanks to a bequest from the noblewoman Maria Mišljenović and placed under the protection of the confraternity of San Girolamo degli Schiavoni.⁷⁸ Another form of assistance to women, common among many national confraternities, especially those from relatively large communities long established in Rome, was to provide dowries to poor women from their "nation." This act of "charity"

76 Binasco, "Le comunità anglo-celtiche," 37–48: 39.

77 On all these, see Anna Esposito, "Donne e confraternite," in *Studi confraternali. Orientamenti, problemi, testimonianze*, (ed.) Marina Gazzini (Florence: 2009), 53–78. More specifically, for hospices for Castilian women in the late 1400s see Vaquero Piñeiro, "L'ospedale della nazione castigliana," 58–61, 68–69. In the early 1500s the hospice for Castilian women was moved to a building in the district of Sant'Eustachio where it remained until 1590.

78 Jadranka Neralić, "Il ruolo delle istituzioni illiriche di Roma nella formazione della nazione croata," in *Chiese e nazioni a Roma*, 133–159: 140. Maria Mišljenović was a court lady of the last queen of Bosnia, Katarina Kosača Kotromanić, an exile in Rome.

helped these women to integrate more fully into the host environment, especially when they married local Roman men.⁷⁹

Lastly, one should point out the special case of the confraternity of San Giovanni Decollato dei Fiorentini that, aside from the standard support offered to its member, was actively engaged in providing final assistance to prisoners condemned to death and comfort for their families.⁸⁰

In order to be able to carry out their various charitable goals, erect their own places of worship, and set up, enlarge, or restore hospitals and hospices, national confraternities amassed a more or less conspicuous real estate portfolio. With the passage of time and with the consolidation, in the 15th century, of their charitable activities, the economic aspects of their hospices began to grow ever broader as the number of properties they owned increased thanks to purchases and donations. These properties were to be used as investments that produced a rental income. The value of houses and shops, and the revenue from the income they produced did not represent the entire patrimony of these institutions, but constituted a very large share of the income confraternities could count on, alongside membership dues, testamentary bequests, and alms.⁸¹ Such was the case, for example, with the confraternity and church of San Girolamo degli Schiavoni that, in the early years of the 16th century, could count on the rental income from the eighteen buildings, however modest, they owned, most in the area near their church in the district of Campo Marzio near the port of Ripetta.⁸²

Among the other national foundations those of Santa Maria dell'Anima dei Tedeschi and of San Giacomo degli Spagnoli stand out.⁸³ Neither of these had many houses or shops—at most about thirty in total for both institutions combined—but they were very profitable because most were located on streets or piazzas where the city's economic life unfolded, that is, in the very central districts of Ponte and Parione. The two confraternities also took advantage of the favourable real estate market at the end of the 15th century and beginning

79 This was a "charity" practices by national corporations, as well; see Schulz, "Artigiani tedeschi in Italia," 214.

80 Polverini Fosi, "Pietà, devozione e politica." On the topic of comforting confraternities, see *The Art of Executing Well: Rituals of Execution in Renaissance Italy*, (ed.) Nicholas Terpstra (Kirkville: 2008) and Nicholas Terpstra's article in this collection, "Confraternities and Capital Punishment: Charity, Culture, and Civic Religion in the Communal and Confessional Age."

81 Palermo, "Il patrimonio immobiliare," 279.

82 Neralić, "Il ruolo delle istituzioni illiriche," 147.

83 Palermo, "Il patrimonio immobiliare"; Manuel Vaquero Piñeiro, *La renta y las casas. El patrimonio inmobiliario de Santiago de los Españoles de Roma entre los siglos XV y XVII* (Rome: 1999).

of the 16th fed by the growing demand for houses in the wake of exceptional demographic and urban growth in the city; they did so by constantly offering short-term rental contracts—usually only one-year terms, sometime only six-months—so as let rents rise with the market. Long-term contracts were normally reserved for the restoration of buildings in poor condition. It should be noted that 90% of the houses of the German confraternity were rented to fellow Germans.

7 Conclusion

The phenomenon of national confraternities in Rome, as elsewhere, cannot be detached from other phenomena relative to immigration or to the process of integration of newly arrived populations. Previous scholarship has generally tended to isolate these institutions from the social context in which they operated and to study them as quasi-autonomous microcosms. More recent scholarship has, instead, opened the way for a different approach to the study of this type of association by examining it in close relation with the host society and by studying its evolution and its dynamics in relation both to common problems and situations,⁸⁴ not to mention the politics of the various “nations” towards the Holy See. Future scholarship on “national” confraternities and institutions in Rome (or, for that matter, in Venice and other cities that were home to large communities of foreigners) will need to develop further this holistic approach and contextualise these institutions both within the context of the host community and the special dynamics of diasporic populations.

Translated by Konrad Eisenbichler

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84 Anna Esposito, “I forenses a Roma,” in Esposito, *Un'altra Roma*, 86–87.

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At the Crossroads of Cultures: The Orthodox Confraternities of Central and Eastern Europe from the 16th to the 18th Century

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1 Introduction

The Crown of the Kingdom of Poland, which in 1569 became the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, stood at the crossroads of two great civilisations: Western (Latin) and Eastern (Byzantine). The line that divided the Slavs into Catholic (Latin) and Orthodox (Greco-Russian), as well as Europe into its Western and Eastern spheres, cut exactly across the territories of the Polish state. As a result, Poland was under the influence of Western Europe, yet remained in close contact with neighbouring Eastern European countries.¹ For many years, these different cultures and religions combined with active trade relations to strengthen and enrich the native culture of Poland with both western and eastern elements. Poland was thus an exceptional area where the paths of the continent's civilisations crossed, intertwined, and separated.² This combination of cultures is evident in the wealth of confraternities active in the region.

This article will survey the origins, characteristics, and activities of Orthodox confraternities in Poland. Like their Catholic counterparts, Orthodox confraternities gathered the faithful from different social strata, but, as we will see, they were not large-scale organisations and brought together only the most active parts of society. They are also peculiar to Poland and seem not to have developed in other countries with Orthodox populations. One reason for this may well be found in the tolerant religious policy of Polish kings and the penetration of Protestant and Catholic patterns of religious renewal into these

1 In order to simplify the matter for the reader, I will sometimes refer to the Crown of the Kingdom of Poland and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth as Poland.

2 Aleksander W. Mikołajczak, "Między Latinitas i Cyrillianitas—na rozdrożu europejskiej tożsamości" ["Between Latinitas and Cyrillianitas—at the Crossroads of European Identity"], in *Kultura wobec kręgów tożsamości* [*The Culture to the Circles of Identity*], (eds.) Teresa Kostyrko, Tadeusz Zgółka, (Poznań: 2000), 203–214; Jan Stradomski, *Spory o "wiarę grecką" w dawnej Rzeczypospolitej* [*Disputes Over the "Greek Faith" in the Former Rzeczypospolita*], (Kraków: 2003), 11.

areas. The split in the Orthodox Church that led to the appearance of the Uniate Church (1596) intensified the development of Orthodox confraternities and involved them in political activity. As a result, Orthodox confraternities contributed significantly to the development of education and printing, as well as to the establishment of the first Orthodox university in Ukraine, the Mohyla Academy in Kiev. Orthodox confraternities regulated themselves in line with their own statutes, which were democratic in nature, as all members were treated equally regardless of differences in wealth and position. They administered their own property and contributed to charitable works in the community, such as managing hospitals. They also undertook initiatives aimed at reforming the Orthodox Church from the bottom up and motivating the faithful. In those dioceses that joined the union with the Catholic Church, no Orthodox confraternities were abolished but continued to function as Uniate confraternities—though now limited to strictly religious and social activities, very much as their Catholic counterparts were.

2 The Orthodox Community in Poland

The incorporation of Red Ruthenia and its indigenous Orthodox population, remnants of the great Byzantine Empire, into the Polish state in 1349 led to a complete transformation in the ethno-religious structure of the country, but also to the peaceful coexistence of the two great branches of Christianity within one state.³ The number of Orthodox faithful increased even more when the Crown of the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania united as a dual state under a single monarch (1385). In the second half of the 14th century, Orthodox Ruthenians constituted 80% of the population of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania while the ruling Lithuanians accounted for only 20%. Over time, the privileged position of the Catholic Church in the Polish-Lithuanian state led to a decline of Orthodox culture and religion, which lost their dominant position and the Orthodox community became a tolerated minority.⁴

Polish rulers, in particular King Casimir the Great, the last of the Piast dynasty, and the Jagiellonian rulers that followed him, were aware of the fact that only by supporting the Orthodox faithful would they safeguard their power in the multi-religion state. In return for royal support, the Orthodox population

³ Ruthenia (Rus) and the Ruthenians should not be confused with Russia and the Russians.

⁴ Juliusz Bardach, *O Rzeczpospolitą Obojga Narodów. Dzieje związku Polski z Litwą do schyłku XVIII w.* [*For the Commonwealth of Both Nations. History of Poland's Union with Lithuania Until the end of the Eighteenth Century*], (Warsaw: 1998), 4–5.

remained loyal to Catholic Polish rulers despite their involvement in wars with the Orthodox Duchy of Moscow. The Teutonic Order tried to take diplomatic advantage of this arrangement by accusing the king of Poland of allying himself with the “schismatic” against the Catholic Teutonic State. At the Council of Constance (1414–18), Teutonic propaganda tried to deny the right of the Orthodox population to call themselves Christian, in spite of the fact that at that same time troops made up of Orthodox soldiers were defending lands that had been Christian for ages.⁵ The Orthodox community proved its loyalty to the Polish crown not only then, but in the 16th and the first half of the 17th century as well.

With the incorporation of Red Ruthenia and the union with Lithuania with Poland several other religions, denominations, and nationalities became part of state: Armenians, Karaites, Tartars, and Vlachs. Because of the crown’s tolerant policies, there was also a noticeable influx of Jews from other parts of Europe.⁶ The religious and ethnic mosaic of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was thus an exception in 16th-century Europe. It did not lead to religious wars, but to peaceful coexistence and the intermingling of different cultures and traditions. This was reflected in the activities of religious confraternities, both Catholic and Orthodox.⁷

3 The Administrative Division of the Orthodox Church in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth

The administrative divisions of the Orthodox Church in Ruthenian territories after their 1349 incorporation into Poland were completed at the beginning of the 15th century. The unified metropolitan archdiocese of Kiev was divided into the Lithuanian (Kiev-Halych) and Vladimir-Suzdal (Moscow) districts.

5 Antoni Mironowicz, “Kościół prawosławny w dziejach Rzeczypospolitej” [“The Orthodox Church in the History of Poland”], *Symposium* 4 (2000), no. 1(6), 43–44.

6 *Rzeczpospolita wielu wyznań. Materiały z międzynarodowej konferencji, Kraków, 18–20 listopada 2002* [The Commonwealth of Many Religions. Materials From an International Conference, Kraków, 18–20th November, 2002], (ed.) Adam Kaźmierczyk (Kraków: 2004); *Rzeczpospolita państwem wielu narodowości i wyznań. XVI–XVIII wiek* [The Commonwealth of Many Nations and Religions. 16th–18th Centuries] (eds.) Tomasz Ciesielski, Anna Filipczak-Kocur (Warsaw: 2008); *Miasta wielu religii. Topografia sakralna ziem wschodnich dawnej Rzeczypospolitej* [Cities of Many Religions. Sacral Topography of the Eastern Lands of the Former Commonwealth], (eds.) Melchior Jakubowski, Maksymilian Sas, Filip Walczyna (Warsaw: 2016).

7 Juliusz Bardach, “Bractwa cerkiewne na ziemiach ruskich Rzeczypospolitej w XVI–XVII wieku” [“Orthodox Confraternities in the Ruthenian Lands of the Polish State in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries”], *Kwartalnik Historyczny*, 74.1 (1967), 77.

In Poland, the Orthodox Church received organisational autonomy in 1458. Lithuanian Polish rulers worked to create an independent administrative structure, which resulted in the establishment of the Kiev-Halych metropolis and in the Moscow metropolis giving up its claims to jurisdiction over Orthodox structures located outside the Grand Duchy of Moscow. In the 16th century, the Kiev-Halych metropolis consisted of nine dioceses (eparchies). As a result of the wars between the Polish-Lithuanian state and Moscow, the dioceses of Smolensk (1514) and Polotsk (1563) were lost. During his victorious expeditions, King Stephen Bathory managed to regain the latter diocese. Before the conclusion of the Union of Brest (1595–96), the Kiev-Halych metropolis was divided into eight eparchies: Kiev, Volodymyr-Brest, Lutsk-Ostroh, Polotsk-Vitebsk, Przemyśl-Sambir, Halych-Lviv-Kamenets. Although the capital of the metropolis was Kiev, the metropolitan usually resided in Vilnius or Novgorod, or in the diocese where he had previously been bishop. The Kiev-Halych metropolis belonged to the patriarchate of Constantinople, but in 1685 Metropolitan Gideon accepted the authority of the patriarch of Moscow over the whole of Ruthenia, which resulted in the subordination of the entire administrative structure of the Orthodox Church in Polish lands to the Russian Orthodox Church. After the conclusion of the Union of Brest in 1596, the Orthodox Church was proscribed and its place was taken over by the Eastern (Ruthenian) Catholic Church, which recognised the pope's sovereignty. The Orthodox Church regained its rights in 1633 when the metropolis of Kiev officially began to operate.⁸

4 The Union of Brest and the Appearance of Uniate Confraternities

At the Council in Brest in 1595–96, a new Catholic church was established—the Greek Catholic Church⁹ (*Ecclesia Ruthena Unita*). The decision on the ecclesiastical union was taken by King Sigismund III Vasa, some of the Orthodox bishops, and state dignitaries of both Churches. The union was supported

8 Tadeusz Śliwa, "Kościół wschodni w Monarchii Jagiellonów w latach 1506–1596," in *Historia Kościoła w Polsce*, t. 1, *Do roku 1764*, cz. 2 *Od roku 1506*, ["The Eastern Church in the Jagiellonian Monarchy 1506–1596," in *The Church in Poland*, vol. 1, *Until 1764*, Part 2, *From 1506*], (eds.) Bolesław Kumor, Zdzisław Obertyński, (Poznań: 1974), 89–90; Marian Bendza, "Inkorporacja metropolii kijowskiej do patriarchatu moskiewskiego," in *Autokefalie Kościoła prawosławnego w Polsce* ["The incorporation of the Kiev Metropolis into the Patriarchate of Moscow," in *Autocephalies of the Orthodox Church in Poland*], (eds.) Antoni Mironowicz, Urszula Pawluczuk, Piotr Chomik (Białystok: 2006), 106–107.

9 Also known as the Eastern Catholic Church or (Ruthenian) Uniate Church.

by the Holy See, which sought to expand its influence in Eastern Europe. The king and his Great Chancellor Jan Zamoyski were convinced that the union was in the interest of the state since the unlawfully established patriarchate of Moscow (1589) posed the danger that the tsar might use a religious pretext to intervene in the internal affairs of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Polish Jesuits, especially Piotr Skarga, and the Apostolic nuncio also played a significant role in the move for union. The Orthodox hierarchy led by the metropolitan of Kiev, Michal Rahoza, supported the union since they saw it as an opportunity to revive the inner life of the Orthodox Church and gain a better position among the state elites (the possibility of sitting in the Senate). By virtue of the agreement, Orthodox leaders recognised the pope as the head of the Church and accepted Catholic doctrine while retaining the Byzantine liturgical rite. The administrative structure of the newly created Uniate Church was made up of three archdioceses (archeparchies)—Kiev, Polotsk, and Smolensk—and six dioceses (eparchies)—Chelm, Lviv, Lutsk-Ostroh, Pinsk-Turov, Przemysl and Volodymyr-Brest.¹⁰

Not all Orthodox delegates accepted the agreement. Some, led by Prince Konstanty Wasyl Ostrogski, two Orthodox bishops, and most of the monastic clergy, opposed the union and held a second council in Brest (1596). Alongside them, there were also representatives of Orthodox confraternities: eight members of the Vilnius confraternity, five from Bielsko, and three from Lviv, who had a strong position in the Orthodox Church. The sessions of the two councils led to the division of the Orthodox Church into two camps: (1) the Orthodox Church (called “disuniate”), with the majority of monastic clergy and the faithful as well as the bishops of Lviv and Przemysl; (2) the Uniate Church, with the remaining Orthodox hierarchy and the faithful who were supported by the Catholic Church and the king. On the one hand, the split in the Orthodox Church was a source of conflict between the two denominations, but on the other hand it encouraged the Orthodox elites to implement thorough reforms in religious life, education, social welfare, and culture. Researchers stress that, paradoxically, in spite of the antagonisms, the Orthodox clergy and the faithful led by Orthodox confraternities applied the models of reforms developed by the Catholic Church during the Counter-Reformation.

Because the defence of ethnic interests was synonymous with remaining faithful to one of the churches, Orthodox confraternities became the

10 Bolesław Kumor, “Geneza i zawarcie unii brzeskiej,” in *Unia brzeska, geneza, dzieje i konsekwencje w kulturze narodów słowiańskich* [“The Origins and Conclusion of the Union of Brest,” in *The Brest Union, Genesis, History and Consequences in the Culture of Slavic Nations*], (eds.) Ryszard Łużny, Franciszek Ziejka, Andrzej Kępiński (Krakow: 1994), 26–44.

representatives of Ruthenians in their quest for equality with Catholics. Orthodox confraternities stood against Uniates at parish and national level. They also fought for the rights of Ruthenian burghers who suffered discrimination in access to municipal offices or were denied the right to settle freely. In addition, stauropegic confraternities undertook a wide range of activities in defence of Orthodoxy in Poland.¹¹ They sent their representatives to the general parliament (*sejm*) and to local assemblies (*sejmiki ziemskie*) in order to exert pressure on deputies and support opinions favourable to their aims.¹²

Efforts to recognise the rights of the Orthodox Church in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth continued until the 1630s, when the election *sejm* of 1632 and King Wladyslaw IV Vasa endorsed the content of the agreement between the Uniates and the Orthodox Church entitled *Conciliatory Points for the Citizens of the Crown and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania who Remain in the Greek Religion*. The agreement introduced equality between the Orthodox and Uniate Churches and restored the Orthodox metropolis of Kiev with its seven dioceses, which had been operating unofficially since 1620. Some important provisions regarding Orthodox confraternities were also included: they were allowed for the establishment of schools and printing houses, and had the right to possess churches, hospitals, schools, and shelters.¹³

Orthodox confraternities were given the choice to become Uniate or remain Orthodox confraternities, as their members wished.¹⁴ This sometimes

11 Stauropegic confraternities enjoyed *stauropegia*, the law of exemption reserved to the patriarch himself. See n. 16 below.

12 Chynczewska-Hennel, "Rola bractw prawosławnych w polemice międzywyznaniowej w Rzeczypospolitej końca XVI i pierwszej połowy XVII wieku" ["The Role of Orthodox Confraternities in Interfaith Polemics in Poland of the Late 16th and the First Half of the 17th Centuries"], in "Pokazanie Cerkwie prawdziwej..." *Studia nad dziejami i kulturą Kościoła prawosławnego w Rzeczypospolitej* ["The True Image of the Orthodox Church..." *Studies on the History and Culture of the Orthodox Church in Poland*], (ed.) Piotr Chomik (Białystok: 2004), 8–36.

13 Antoni Mironowicz, *Bractwa cerkiewne w Rzeczypospolitej* [Orthodox Confraternities in Poland] (Białystok: 2003), 37–39. It should be emphasized that in these efforts the Orthodox were supported by Protestants, especially Calvinists, Lutherans and Czech brethren, Tomasz Kempa, "Animatoryzy współpracy protestancko-prawosławnej w okresie kontrreformacji," ["Animators of Protestant-Orthodox Cooperation during the Counter-Reformation Period,"] in *Rzeczpospolita państwem wielu narodowości*, 321–341; Nicolas Kazarian, "When the East invited itself to the Kingdom of Poland's feast: The first publication of the correspondence between Patriarch Jeremias II and the Lutherans of Tübingen University (16th Century)," in *Prawosławni w dziejach Rzeczypospolitej*, vol. 1, 81–91.

14 Witold Kołbuk, "Ustawy i statuty unickich bractw cerkiewnych" in *Unia brzeska, geneza, dzieje i konsekwencje w kulturze narodów słowiańskich* ["The Laws and Statues of Uniate Confraternities," in *The Union of Brest, Genesis, History and Consequences in the Culture of Slavic Nations*], (eds.) Ryszard Łużny, Franciszek Ziejka, Andrzej Kępiński (Kraków: 1994), 329–336.

generated conflicts, especially with regard to the property of the Orthodox church and control over the activities of members. Uniate confraternities focused on slightly different issues than their Orthodox counterparts. They adhered to the traditions of Catholic confraternities and paid more attention to the revival of sacramental life and Marian devotion. Participation in the confraternity was supposed to deepen individual piety. Unlike their Orthodox counterparts, Catholic and Uniate confraternities did not have influence over the clergy or the government of the parish.¹⁵

5 The Legal Basis for Orthodox Confraternities

Confraternities required the approval and supervision of ecclesiastical authorities. In the case of Orthodox confraternities, the person granting such approval depended on whether the confraternity was stauropegic or non-stauropegic. *Stauropegia* was the law of exemption reserved to the patriarch himself.¹⁶ Under this law, confraternities approved by the patriarch of Constantinople were removed from the jurisdiction of the bishop or metropolitan and transferred to that of the patriarch himself. Such a privilege put the confraternity above the local Orthodox hierarchy. After 1632, the patriarch of Constantinople had only nominal authority over the Orthodox Church in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth; his authority was taken over by the metropolitan of Kiev, who was appointed Exarch of Poland (viceroy of the patriarch). Thus, the patriarch of Constantinople and then, after him, the metropolitan of Kiev approved the statutes, rights, and privileges of stauropegic confraternities, acted as the judge in cases where their rights were violated, and provided spiritual support for the members. For their part, stauropegic confraternities guaranteed the patriarch an insight into the internal situation of the Orthodox Church in the

15 Lorens, *Bractwa*, 230–232; Bohdan Lazorak, “Źródła do historii unickich bractw cerkiewnych eparchii lwowskiej w zbiorach archiwalnych Wydziału Rękopisów i Rzadkich Książek Muzeum Narodowego we Lwowie im. Metropolity Andrzeja Szeptyckiego,” in *Bractwa religijne w średniowieczu i w okresie nowożytnym (do końca XVIII wieku)* [“Sources for the history of the Uniate Church Fraternities of the Eparchy of Lviv in the Department of Manuscripts and Rare Books in the Archives of Bishop Andrey Sheptytsky National Museum in Lviv,” in *Religious Confraternities in the Middle Ages and the Modern Era (Until the End of 18th Century)*], (eds.) Dominika Burdzy, Beata Wojciechowska (Kielce: 2014), 295–308.

16 The term *stauropegia* is derived from the Greek expression *pegnōmi stauros* (the patriarchal cross). The cross was hung at the seat of an institution that received the patriarchal privilege. It had one vertical beam and two horizontal beams, the lower one beam longer and the upper shorter to symbolize the INRI plaque. Because of this privilege, the Lviv Confraternity was known as the Lviv Stauropegia.

Commonwealth through a number of various reports they had to submit to him. The statutes of non-stauropagic confraternities were approved, instead, by the local bishop in agreement with the central stauropagic authorities. The bishop gave his consent to the establishment of a confraternity and usually recommended setting up a school and hospital for the poor.¹⁷

Confraternities (especially the major ones) sought further approval from secular authorities. To achieve this, members petitioned the king for his approval of confraternal statutes. Normally, kings were in favour of confraternities and granted their approvals to the founding of new ones or the reorganisation of extant ones. With his approval, the king also granted confraternities various rights and privileges, such as permission to build or renovate a church, establish a school, a printing house, a hospital, and the right to own and manage movable and immovable property. Sometime confraternities were exempt from all duties and taxes to the royal treasury. If the privilege was violated, confraternities could file their complaints at the royal courts.¹⁸ As a sign of their gratitude, confraternity members promised to say prayers during church services for the king, his family, and his predecessors.

The confraternity of the Assumption in Lviv served as the model institution for newly formed confraternities. In the 1580s its statutes were approved and it was granted the privilege of *stauropagia*. The confraternity had not previously been strictly structured, but the situation of the Orthodox population in Lviv forced members to create a more formal structure for their sodality. In 1578–1585 the Orthodox burghers demanded in court the same rights enjoyed by Catholics. Since 1583, the Catholic archbishop of Lviv, Jan Dymitr Solikowski, had been trying to force the Orthodox faithful to adopt the Gregorian calendar introduced by Pope Gregory XIII. This prompted the Orthodox population to establish a confraternity to defend themselves against the privileged position of Catholics in the city. In the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, instead, the growing Orthodox confraternal movement was led by the confraternity at the Orthodox church of the Holy Trinity in Vilnius.¹⁹

The position of the two confraternities was strong because the Orthodox population was growing wealthy, which made them feel strong and provided

17 Krystyna Kuźmak, Mirosław Szegda, "Cerkiewne bractwa" ["Orthodox Confraternities"], in *Encyklopedia katolicka* [*The Catholic Encyclopaedia*] (Lublin: 1979), vol. 3, col. 16.

18 Kuźmak, Szegda, "Cerkiewne bractwa," col. 16; L. Ćwikła, "Bractwo," 123.

19 Tomasz Kempa, "Wileńskie bractwo Św. Ducha jako centrum prawosławia w Wielkim Księstwie Litewskim w końcu XVI i w pierwszej połowie XVII w." ["The Vilnius Confraternity of the Holy Spirit as the Centre of Orthodoxy in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania at the End of the 16th and the first half of the 17th Centuries"], *Białoruskie Zeszyty Historyczne* 21 (2004), 47–48.

a material (financial) basis for their efforts at religious renewal.²⁰ It was also important in the awakening of intellectual and cultural life under the influence of the diverse, intertwining currents of the Renaissance, Reformation, and Counter-Reformation. Contacts with other denominations and nationalities made the Orthodox faithful in these two cities aware of the need for a renewal of their church, as well. The example of Protestant communities where lay people played a dominant role, along with the traditions and experiences of their own denomination, prompted the Orthodox laity to take the initiative against the inertia, moral decline, and ignorance of their clergy. In the 1580s, the Ostroh Academy was established and became the first important centre of the rebirth of the intellectual life in Ruthenia. It educated activists capable of taking up the challenge of reform.²¹

When Joachim, patriarch of Antioch, arrived in Lviv in 1585, he found the local Orthodox confraternity strong enough to serve as a tool for the reform of the Orthodox Church. On 1 January 1586 he approved its internal constitution and supplemented it with a number of provisions and wide powers. First and foremost, he granted the confraternity the right of "seniority" over other confraternities. Other confraternities were now obliged to copy the statutes of the Lviv confraternity, since their own statutes were invalidated. In so doing, the patriarch made the confraternity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary both superior to other confraternities and the main organ of Church reform.²²

First, the confraternity was to reform itself and then others were to copy its model by implementing the ideals of Christian life as a community tied in brotherly love and engaged in charitable work. Members were required to break the habit of drinking at confraternal feasts and to gather, instead, in order to read the Bible and conduct edifying conversations. The confraternity was to watch over the moral life of its members, rebuke and punish sinners and the disobedient, and eject those who had gone astray from the confraternity and the Eastern Church. Such an excommunication could not be rescinded by any protopope (an Orthodox priest who exercised control over several parishes, equivalent to a dean in the Catholic church) or bishop until the culprit was reconciled with the confraternity. Moreover, not only did the Lviv confraternity have the right and duty to morally control other confraternities, but also

20 Henryk Samsonowicz, "Mieszczanństwo Rzeczypospolitej wobec Unii Brzeskiej," ["Polish Burghers on the Union of Brest"] in *Unia brzeska z perspektywy czterech stuleci*, 79.

21 Chodynicki, *Kościół*, 179–182.

22 *Diplomata statutaria a Patriarchis Orientalibus Confraternitati Stauropigianae Leopoliensi a. 1586–1592 data cum aliis litteris coaevis et appendice*, vol. 2. *Editionis jubilaeae in memoriam Confraternitatis Stauropigianae Leopoliensis ante trecentos annos fundatae* (Leopoli: 1895), 91–93; Bieńkowski, "Organizacja," 831.

to discipline the lay faithful and the Orthodox clergy. At first the sinner was admonished and, in case of further disobedience, reported to the bishop. The same privilege was given to other confraternities founded on the Lviv model, which made them superior to the clergy and laity in their city and district. The Lviv confraternity could even refuse obedience to the bishop if it considered his conduct incompatible with the canons. In this way, Eastern Orthodox confraternities became the controlling body for the clergy and the faithful in matters of religion and morals.²³ Patriarch Joachim's privilege placed the Lviv confraternity above the Orthodox hierarchy. In 1587 Patriarch Jeremiah of Constantinople further sanctioned the confraternity's position by granting the privilege of *stauropagia* to its church. The confraternity was thus removed from the jurisdiction of the local ordinary (bishop, metropolitan) and made subject only to the patriarch of Constantinople.²⁴

In the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, it was the confraternity at the monastery of the Holy Trinity in Vilnius that led the reform process. In 1584, King Stephen Bathory handed over the management of the monastery to the city council and the Orthodox assessors board. In the same year, the metropolitan of Kiev, Onisifor Dziewonka, approved the Orthodox confraternity of the Holy Trinity, which reformed its statutes under the influence of the Lviv confraternity. Patriarch Jeremiah approved them on 3 June 1588 in Vilnius and, a year later, on 2 July 1598 they were approved by King Sigismund III Vasa. When in 1609, on the initiative of the confraternity, the Monastery of the Holy Spirit was erected, the confraternity changed its dedication from the Holy Trinity to the Holy Spirit.²⁵

Based on the models from Lviv and Vilnius, new confraternities appeared in other cities: Krasnystaw and Rohatyn (1589), Brest, Grodek and Gologory (1591), Komarno (1592), Bielsko and Lublin (1594), Halych (circa 1594), Stara Sol and Mogilev (1600). At the beginning of the 17th century, confraternities were founded in Drohobych, Sambir, Sanok, Kamionka Strumilowa, and Zamosc. This shows that Orthodox confraternities first formed in western dioceses, often in towns with mixed religious communities, and even outside the areas dominated by the Orthodox population, such as in Vilnius and Lublin. In the following decades, confraternities also developed towards the east and south, in cities and towns. In 1615, a confraternity was established in Kiev and two years later another in Lutsk.²⁶ Apart from Lviv (with its dominant position in

23 Lorens, *Bractwa*, 38–39; Mironowicz, *Bractwa*, 21–22; Mironowicz, "Bractwa cerkiewne," 317–318.

24 Lorens, *Bractwa*, 37.

25 *Zbiór danych dyplomatów i aktów miast: Wilna, Kowna, Trok*, 6–8; Kempa, "Wileńskie bractwo," 47–69.

26 Bieńkowski, "Organizacja," 832–833; Isajewicz, *Voluntary Brotherhood*, 30–36.

Red Ruthenia) and Vilnius (which influenced the whole of Lithuania), stauropagic confraternities were also established in Mogilev in Belarus, Lutsk in Volhynia, and Kiev in Ukraine. These confraternities informed one another of their problems, provided advice, supported one another legally and financially, took a common position on ecclesiastical matters, sent books and teachers to other confraternities, and supported the Orthodox hierarchy.²⁷

6 Membership

All Orthodox faithful could belong to confraternities, regardless of their social position. These confraternities, however, were not as numerous as their Catholic counterparts, since the largest ones had only several dozen members (the Lviv confraternity had 50, the Lutsk confraternity 100). The Vilnius confraternity was an exception with 370 members at the turn of the 16th and 17th centuries. Eastern Orthodox confraternities were not large organisations because they attracted only the most active individuals who were able to influence society. Urban confraternities were dominated by burghers, with members of the Orthodox municipal self-government (aldermen, assessors), and members of the most influential craft guilds. Representatives of the nobility and clergy also belonged to confraternities. Orthodox burghers probably sought to attract noblemen into the organisation in order to obtain material support and gain influential patrons, and not necessarily to engage them directly in confraternal activities. Many representatives of prominent Ruthenian noble families were members of Orthodox confraternities. The involvement of non-local gentry in major confraternities such as those in Vilnius, Lutsk, Kiev, Minsk, or Mahilyow did not alter the fact that a majority of these institutions retained their local character and focused on their parishes.²⁸

Among the members there were also clergymen, though they served mainly as preachers and commentators of the Bible at confraternal meetings. It seems that confraternities were reluctant to accept Orthodox clergy so as not to lose control over their sodality. The statutes of the Lviv confraternity (1586) indicated who could become a member: "a burgher or a nobleman, or a suburban, or common men of all states, and foreigners"; the list did not include the clergy. The statutes of the Vilnius confraternity (1588), instead, stated that the community was to consist of three estates: the clergy, the gentry (nobility),

²⁷ Mironowicz, *Bractwa*, 42–43.

²⁸ Bieńkowski, "Organizacja," 836; Mironowicz, "Bractwa cerkiewne," 346; Ćwikła, "Bractwo," 124; Kempa, "Wileńskie bractwo," 49.

and the common people. There were exceptions to this rule, such as the Lutsk confraternity, where there were nine clergymen and only six laymen among the founders.²⁹

Orthodox confraternities were practically male-only organisations. Although there were women (sisters) among the members, the statutes did not give them a voice in decisions taken at meeting; theirs was rather a "supporting" membership consisting of wealthy noblewomen, a situation that in the 18th century led to the establishment of separate confraternities for women. The men who joined had to be married, with family, and with a certain economic status. "Junior confraternities" were created for younger people who could then, after marriage, move to a confraternity for "senior" men.³⁰

Confraternity statutes outlined the process for becoming a member. The first step was to inform the confraternity's priest about one's desire to join. Once accepted, the candidate had to kiss the Holy Cross and the priest's hand at a confraternal meeting; he then read the statutes, took an oath, and committed himself to secrecy, loyalty, and obedience to the elders. As a sign of loyalty to the confraternity, he shook hands with all other members. Confraternal statutes also defined the rights and obligations of members. What was characteristic of confraternities was the deeply democratic nature of their regulations. It is noteworthy that despite wealth and status differences all members were treated equally. Everyone had the right to participate in elections to the board and all votes counted as equal. All brethren had the same obligations. In the first place, they had to make certain contributions to the confraternal purse, which was one of the main sources of income for the institution. In addition, they had to make donations for the maintenance of the church, school, and hospital. Members were obliged to help the poor, sick, widows, and orphans. Attendance at confraternal church services, funerals, and meetings was very important.³¹

7 Administration

Every confraternity had an executive board, whose election and competence were determined by the statutes. The most eminent individuals were chosen in order to form a strong and autonomous authority. They were elected from among the membership, therefore the election was fully democratic. Usually two or four representatives were chosen, called *elder brothers*, *seniores*

29 Ćwikła, "Bractwo," 125.

30 Bieńkowski, "Organizacja," 837; Ćwikła, "Bractwo," 125.

31 Lorens, *Bractwa*, 156–173; Ćwikła, "Bractwo," 125–127.

confraternitatis, *aldermen*, *provisors* or sometimes *grandmasters*. Those titles were derived from guild nomenclature and were common to Catholic, Orthodox, and Uniate confraternities, which suggests that the different religious spheres intersected. Elections were usually held on the first Sunday after Easter (called Thomas's Sunday) or on the patronal feast of the church and confraternity. Although the term of office was one year, the same people held the same positions for many years, which suggests that re-election was allowed. The winning candidate had to win 100% of the votes; any opposing votes had to be supported by a valid reason and an unjustified objection was punishable with a fine in wax or money. All brothers were obliged to obey and respect the elders. The candidates had to meet the conditions of impeccable morals, honesty, conscientiousness, piety, and sobriety. Confraternities usually admitted older and more experienced people who were respected in the community and made up the urban or rural elite. The confraternal board was empowered to make decisions on behalf of the confraternity and in some cases appeared with the whole community. The elders represented the association outside and defended its rights and interests; they were heard in church and at secular courts, and exchanged correspondence with various institutions, churches, and secular dignitaries.³²

Members of the board were obliged to care for and increase confraternal assets. They also had to take care of the local Orthodox church and the monastery, and supervise the observance of the statutes as well as the rights of the Orthodox church by the members of the confraternity. The confraternal board acted as the confraternal court. Members whose "reprehensible and dishonest conduct degraded the whole confraternity" were judged at confraternal gatherings. Penalties were imposed for absence at confraternal meetings, funerals of members, and church services on holidays specified in the statutes, as well as for revealing confraternity secrets. Confraternities were also arbitration courts and members had to relinquish their right to appeal to state courts (municipal, land, and town courts).³³

8 The Religious Life of Confraternities

The most important reason for the establishment of confraternities was to spread the glory of God and seek salvation for living and deceased members. Members were obliged by confraternal statutes to be an example of pious life and to fulfil all religious duties. They were required to regularly attend mass,

32 Lorens, *Bractwa*, 124–126.

33 Mironowicz, "Bractwa cerkiewne," 320–321; Ćwikła, "Bractwo," 127.

statutory services, and processions, refrain from alcohol abuse, and lead a life in harmony with Christian morality. The model conduct of members was to shape Christian principles within the community, virtues such as the ability to forgive, to give consent, to obey, and to deepen the faith. As a way to achieve this, they were also required to read the Bible and writings of the Fathers of the Church at confraternal gatherings. All church services were to be conducted in a solemn manner, for the glory of God. During the liturgy one or two members were required to stand in the centre of the church with lit candles. Confraternities sought strong participation from the clergy and engaged bands and choirs, which were usually composed of confraternal school students. They decorated the church and confraternal altars, and illuminated them with a large number of candles. Special attention was paid to the solemn celebration of the most important feasts in the liturgical calendar: Christmas, Easter, Pentecost, and the feast day of the patron saint of the church and confraternity.³⁴

Confraternities also cared for the salvation of their deceased members. Masses for their souls were celebrated twice a year: on Meatfare Saturday (*sobota mięsopustna*)³⁵ and the Saturday before Pentecost. During the service *koliwo* was prepared, a dish of cooked wheat mixed with honey, raisins, almonds and dried plums, brought to the altar on specific feasts in order to bless the food. The brethren, standing with lit candles, prayed for the deceased. A fine or a donation of a specific amount of wax was imposed for not attending the service.³⁶ Members were obliged to record their ancestors in a book called *pominalnik*, which was read during the Liturgy of Preparation in the period of prayers for the souls. In addition, in Great Lent the confraternal priest was obliged to pray for the dead and living members before the end of orthros and vespers.³⁷

34 Mironowicz, "Bractwa cerkiewne," 315–316.

35 The second Saturday before Great Lent.

36 *Diplomata statutoria*, 99: "And when a member of the Confraternity of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary dies, the brethren should leave all their work and affairs, and go to the funeral of their brother, carry him with candles and ceremony to the grave. And if anyone spurns their brother and does not go to the funeral, they shall pay 20 groszy to the confraternity without excuse."

37 Mironowicz, "Działalność charytatywna w Kościele prawosławnym na terenie Rzeczypospolitej w XVI–XVIII wieku" in *Charitas. Miłosierdzie i opieka społeczna w ideologii, normach postępowania i praktyce społeczności wyznaniowych w Rzeczypospolitej XVI–XVIII wieku* ["Charity Work in the Orthodox Church in Rzeczpospolita in the 16th–18th Centuries," in *Caritas. Mercy and Social Care in the Ideology, Standards of Conduct, and Practice of Religious Communities in Rzeczpospolita in the 16th–18th Centuries*], (eds.) Urszula Augustyniak, Andrzej Karpiński (Warsaw: 1999), 84–85. Liturgy of Preparation—the initial part of the liturgy in which the preparation of the Eucharistic gifts takes place. It is

Confraternities were also responsible for organizing funerals of members and “strangers who died in the street from frost and hunger, as often as it happens.” The statutes of the Mogilev confraternity referred to the Christian tradition of providing funeral rites to the deceased. Attendance at funerals was obligatory for all members. They were obliged to leave their ordinary duties and carry the body in procession to the church, and stand with lit candles by the deceased during the liturgy. Everybody prayed for the peace of his soul and *koliwo* was prepared. After the service donations were distributed to the poor. If someone did not take part in a member’s funeral, that person was obliged to donate a sum of money to the confraternal purse.³⁸

The care of the local Orthodox church was another major responsibility of confraternities. They saw to its construction, renovation, provision of paraments, liturgical vestments, icons, books, sometimes also incense and wine and, above all, candles. The Orthodox confraternities in Przemyśl, for example, had to take care of the two Orthodox churches and their belfries, keep the fences around them in good condition, supply them with candles, incense, wine, and other necessities.³⁹

Confraternities lavished special care on the icons of their patron saints, decorated them with silver and gold crowns, dressed them up in robes made of precious metals, attached votive offerings, and surrounded them with candles. Valuable images were covered with curtains made from expensive fabrics, often embroidered. During processions, members carried *feretrons*⁴⁰ and banners that depicted the Divine Persons, the Blessed Virgin Mary, and the patron saints of the confraternity. Confraternities also collected liturgical books that they either had purchased or received as testamentary legacies. The books were often hand-written and covered with velvet and gold. The margins were used to record particularly important confraternal events.⁴¹

Care for the church building included care for its staff. At the turn of the 16th and 17th centuries, Orthodox confraternities sought to maintain control of the clergy. They appointed and dismissed parsons, obliged them to be involved only in liturgical affairs, and kept them away from matters related to church property, since this was viewed as confraternity, not church property. According to the statutes of the Lviv confraternity, members had the right to

accompanied by the burning of incense and prayers for the dead; *orthros*—is a psalm performed before the Hour of Reading or Lauds; *vespers*—an evening service which is a thanksgiving for the past day.

38 Bieńkowski, “Organizacja,” 835; Mironowicz, “Działalność,” 84–85.

39 Lorens, *Bractwa*, 213–217.

40 *Feretron* is a double-sided panel painting which is carried in processions.

41 Lorens, *Bractwa*, 218–219; Mironowicz, “Bractwa cerkiewne,” 317.

control the presbyters, see to their good morals, and protect them from debauchery, drunkenness, divination, and usury. In the 18th century confraternities also had to maintain the priest and provide him with material help. They also supplied monks with food and clothing.⁴²

9 Charitable Work

As part of their regular activity Orthodox confraternities helped those in need and suffering. Confraternal institutions originated from the spirit of evangelical love and were meant to express love in all their activities. Confraternal statutes formulated the duties of members towards their fellow men. They were obliged to organise feasts for the poor and do merciful deeds for the sick and poor brethren, orphans, and widows.⁴³ This is evident in the statutes of the Vilnius confraternity (1592) and those that followed the Vilnius model. The brethren were called “brothers of mercy” and were obliged to do charity work not only for followers of their own faith, but also for members of other denominations.⁴⁴

Orthodox confraternities played a leading role in the development of hospital services in the Eastern Orthodox Church. They established and maintained hospitals for the sick and hospices for the poor, the handicapped, and orphans. The statutes required them to annually appoint two hospital caretakers, called sextons, whose duties included management of hospital funds, provision of food for the poor and the sick in the hospital, and support for poor students at the confraternal school. They appeared in court, independently or with the entire confraternity, in cases of misappropriation of hospital goods, and against notorious debtors. They signed purchase contracts, received capital, property, and various donations on behalf of all members and the hospital, signed lease agreements and property transactions. Moreover, the sextons supervised the behaviour of boarders, kept order, distributed food, clothing and money, punished the disobedient and quarrelsome, or expelled them for serious misconduct.⁴⁵

42 Lorens, *Bractwa*, 219–227.

43 *Diplomata statutaria*, 94: “They shall care for the provision of widows and orphans, the poor and the weak, and for the strangers they shall care as well.”

44 Mironowicz, “Działalność,” 82; Lorens, *Bractwa*, 233.

45 Rafał Degiel, *Prawosławna opieka społeczna w Slucku na tle innych wyznań w XVII w.* [*Orthodox Social Care in Slutsk Against Other Denominations in the 17th Century*], in *Charitas*, 162; Bieńkowski, „Organizacja,” 834–835; Ćwikła, “Bractwo,” 123, 126, 131–132.

Confraternal funds were also dedicated to the education of orphans, support of widows, unmarried girls, victims of fires or floods, redemption of prisoners, purchase of clothes, and burial services for those who passed away in poverty, as well as for the restoration of abandoned churches and monasteries. Four times a year, when the liturgy was celebrated for the living and deceased, members held a contributory feast for the poor. On major church holidays, they distributed alms from the confraternal box to people in hospitals and to the homeless.

10 Education and Publishing

As part of the reform of the Eastern Orthodox Church confraternities aimed to raise the level of education among the clergy and laity. They set up schools and printing houses, because it was the only way to defend against the expansion of Polish culture, especially Catholic and Protestant. In the 16th century, the spread of the Reformation acted as a trigger. Protestants education thrived on a network of highly active schools established in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Protestant gymnasia in cities such as Gdansk, Elblag, Torun, Leszno, and Rakow were well-organised and provided high quality education. They maintained contacts with European scientific centres and were open to new ideas and concepts. Because of their significant academic and pedagogical achievements they attracted students from neighbouring countries. Protestant printing houses also contributed to the success of the schools by printing translations of the Bible, religious and polemical works, and school textbooks.⁴⁶ This forced Catholics to pay more attention to the education of their young. In 1564, the Jesuits arrived in the Commonwealth to set up their prestigious colleges, which educated not only Catholic, but also Protestant and Orthodox youths.⁴⁷

During the Reformation and Counter-Reformation, Orthodox education remained at a low level since it was limited to teaching how to read liturgical

46 The major Calvinist printing houses were located in Brest and Pinczow; Lutheran in Konigsberg, Gdansk and Torun; Arian (Polish Brethren) in Rakow, Nieswiez, Losko and Wegrow; Bohemian Brethren in Leszno and Szamotuly, Helena Szwejkowska, *Książka drukowana w XV–XVIII wieku. Zarys historyczny* [Printed Book in the 18th Century. Historical Outline] (Wrocław: 1983); Maria Juda, *Przywileje drukarskie w Polsce* [Printing Privileges in Poland] (Lublin: 1992).

47 *Wkład jezuitów do nauki i kultury w Rzeczypospolitej Obojga Narodów i pod zaborem* [The Jesuit Contribution to Science and Culture in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and in the Period of the Partitions], (ed.) Irena Stasiewicz-Jasiukowa (Krakow: 2004).

books, sing Orthodox chants, and the Old Slavonic language. The number of students depended on the current demand for church service in the parish. Parsons and monks served as teachers.⁴⁸ The Ostroh Academy, founded in about 1580 by Prince Konstanty Wasyl Ostrogski, was a precursor to change and had a significant impact on the development of pedagogy and the organisation of education in Ruthenia. In addition to the Old Slavonic language, it taught Greek, Latin, philosophy, theology, mathematics, astronomy, grammar, rhetoric, and logic. Its graduates later became religious and cultural activists, as well as members of Orthodox confraternities. The academy ceased to operate after 1608, but its work continued in schools founded by Orthodox confraternities.⁴⁹

In 1585, a confraternal school was founded in Lviv at the initiative of the Ruthenian burghers Jurij Rohatyniec and Dmytro Krasowski. Its 1586 statutes were modelled on those of the Ostroh Academy. The confraternity chose administrators (*provisors*) from among its members to supervise the school. The confraternal school in Vilnius was founded in 1584 with a privilege granted by King Stephen Bathory. It taught Ruthenian, Greek, Latin and Polish. Soon there were two elementary schools in the city and an Orthodox gymnasium for the humanities, the first in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.⁵⁰

With the support of the Lviv and Vilnius academies, schools were also established in the major Orthodox cities of the Commonwealth: Rohatyn, Lublin, Bielsk Podlaski, Krasnystaw, Halytch, Mogilev, Brest, Minsk, Zamosc, Chelm, Pinsk, and Kiev. In the 16th and 17th centuries, there were over two hundred such schools; at the turn of the 17th and 18th centuries there was a school at almost every Orthodox church. Initially they were Greek-Slavic centres, but over time they began to teach Polish and Latin and became gradually Polonised as western subjects entered the curriculum in place of dialectics and Byzantine rhetoric. Nevertheless, none of the schools lost their Eastern Orthodox spirit, and their teaching of the Polish language and Latin (the latter was an official language of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, alongside the Ruthenian language) allowed students to function at the *Sejm*, at local *sejmiki*, and in various offices and institutions.⁵¹

48 Bieńkowski, "Organizacja," 833–834.

49 Tomasz Kempa, *Akademia i drukarnia ostrogska* [*The Ostroh Academy and Printing House*] (Biały Dunajec: 2006); Mironowicz, *Szkolnictwo prawosławne w Rzeczypospolitej in Szkolnictwo prawosławne w Rzeczypospolitej* ["Orthodox Education in Commonwealth," in *Orthodox Education in Commonwealth*], (eds.) Antoni Mironowicz, Urszula Pawluk, Piotr Chomik (Białystok: 2002), 27–28.

50 Lorens, *Bractwa*, 252–253; Mironowicz, "Szkolnictwo," 21–22.

51 Lorens, *Bractwa*, 254–270; Bieńkowski, "Organizacja," 833–834; Mironowicz, "Bractwa cerkiewne," 318, 321–322.

The first university in Ukraine, the Kiev-Mohyla Academy was founded as a confraternal school. It was established by Metropolitan Piotr Mohyla, who took advantage of the experience of the Ostroh Academy and the school in Lviv. The patriarch intended to create a modern school modelled on Jesuit colleges. Although the Orthodox clergy were unwilling to adopt Latin models and therefore were strongly opposed to his project, in 1632 the elites around the patriarch forced the merging of the monastic school and the Kiev confraternal school into the Kiev-Mohyla College, which in 1658 was transformed into the Kiev-Mohyla Academy. In addition to the Polish language, the Academy introduced the teaching of classical languages, Greek and Latin. The school consisted of five lower classes: infima, grammar, syntax, rhetoric and poetry, and the higher class of philosophy. The Kiev-Mohyla Academy became the most important Eastern Orthodox intellectual centre and influenced the whole of Eastern Europe.⁵²

In addition to the concern for the proper level of education, Orthodox confraternities engaged in publishing activities in order to raise religious awareness in Ruthenian society. Although earlier attempts to address the problem were made by publishing books in the Old Church Slavonic, this was not enough and so it did not significantly influence the life of the Orthodox Church. Printing houses established by confraternities published the Scriptures, liturgical books, polemical literature, and various textbooks on a large scale.⁵³ Printing required adequate financial resources to purchase machinery and employ staff. Profits from book sales were made only after several years, so not every confraternity could afford to publish, so only the largest confraternities, which had sufficient funds, could run printing houses.⁵⁴

In 1581, the printing house that belonged to the Ostrog confraternity became famous for publishing the Bible in Old Church Slavonic, in accordance with Orthodox teachings and traditions.⁵⁵ The greatest merit in the field of publishing

52 Aleksander Jabłonowski, *Akademia Kijowsko-Mohilańska. Zarys historyczny na tle rozwoju ogólnego cywilizacji zachodniej na Rusi* [*The Kiev-Mohyla Academy. Historical Outline in the Light of the General Development of the Western Civilisation in Ruthenia*] (Kraków: 1899–1900); Mironowicz, *Bractwa*, 57–60; Przemysław Nowakowski, “Metropolita kijowski Piotr Mohyla i jego reforma liturgiczna” [“The Kiev Metropolitan Piotr Mohyla and His Liturgical Reform”], in *Pokazanie Cerkwie prawdziwej*, 85–102.

53 Zoja Jaroszewicz-Pieresławcew, “Piotr Mścislawiec—drukarz” in *Prawosławni w dziejach Rzeczypospolitej*, vol. 1 [Latopisy Akademii Supraskiej], [“Piotr Mscislaviec—the Printer” in *Orthodox in the History of the Commonwealth*,] (ed.) Urszula Pawluczuk (Białystok: 2010), 61–69.

54 Lorens, *Bractwa*, 270–271; Ćwikła, “Bractwo,” 131.

55 Tomasz Kempa, “Drukarnia ostrogska,” in *Prawosławne oficyny wydawnicze w Rzeczypospolitej* [“The Ostrog Printing House,” in *Orthodox Publishing Houses in Rzeczypospolita*],

and dissemination of books belonged, however, to the Lviv stauropegic confraternity, which for over two centuries had a monopoly on the printing of books in Old Church Slavonic. This allowed it to publish books in Cyrillic script not only for the Orthodox population of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, but also for the Duchy of Moscow and the Balkan countries. It also provided liturgical books for Orthodox churches.⁵⁶ The printing house of the Vilnius confraternity was also famous for having published the works of the most important Orthodox polemic writer, Meletius Smotrycki (c.1577–1633).⁵⁷

11 Material Assets

The assets owned by Orthodox confraternities allowed them to pursue their goals and engage in charity, education, and religious works. A confraternity's wealth determined its operation and position in the local community. From the very beginning confraternities sought to take control of Orthodox Church property. When a church was founded by a confraternity—which was not an expensive undertaking—the right to manage its assets belonged to the members. The establishment of a parish and construction of a new Orthodox church were not subject to strict legal regulations, as was the case in the Latin Church. In the Eastern Orthodox Church, the bishop's role was limited to the approval of an already erected church and its blessing.⁵⁸ Confraternities also possessed real estate, but it was rarely used by the members themselves. Sometimes fruit trees were planted in confraternal gardens to provide a source of income, but most of the time land was leased for a specified annual rent. In the case of apiaries, confraternities preferred to receive rent in the form of wax and honey, which was in high demand because members had to provide candles for the church and mead for confraternal feasts. Sources also contain information about city stalls, brickworks, and houses used by confraternities. Confraternities obtained those assets by way of purchase and bequests. Testamentary legacies in the form of real estate were common in urban confraternities; they are documented mostly in the 17th century and rarely in the 18th because the devastating wars of the time resulted in a decline in commerce

(eds.) Antoni Mironowicz, Urszula Pawluczuk, Piotr Chomik (Białystok: 2004), 105–126.

56 Maria Juda, "Uprzywilejowane drukarnie we Lwowie doby staropolskiej" ["The Privileged Printing Houses in the Old Polish Lviv"], *Folia Bibliologica* 55/56 (2013/2014), 14–16, 17; Antoni Mironowicz, "Drukarnie bractw cerkiewnych" ["Printing Houses of Orthodox Confraternities"], in *Prawosławne oficyny*, 52–68.

57 Kempa, *Wileńskie bractwo*, 60–61.

58 Ćwikła, "Bractwo," 126.

and, consequently, in wealth among the bourgeoisie. In the eighteenth century, loans called *wiederkauf* were the main source of confraternal income. Confraternities lent money for a specific annual interest and secured the loan on the debtor's immovable property. The money came mostly from testamentary legacies or donations from living members or benefactors. In return, members pledged to pray for the donors and their families.

Part of the income also came from monthly contributions paid by members. Most confraternities followed the example of the Lviv stauropegic confraternity and charged half a *grosz*, while others required one *grosz*. In the eighteenth century contributions were raised to 3–4 *groszy*, and some confraternities charged as much as 10 *groszy*. Confraternal finances increased when members paid fines imposed by the confraternal court. Some financial resources were also obtained from fund-raising and collections in the church on Sundays and public holidays, especially during indulgence feasts. Members were allowed to sit at the entrance door or at the gate, with the confraternity's icon, and collect donations. They could also ask for donations during town fairs, walking with the icon in the market square or standing at the church door. They also earned money for funerals of people who were not registered in the confraternity if the deceased or the family desired a confraternal burial.⁵⁹

12 Conclusion

As this article has tried to demonstrate, Orthodox confraternities played an important part in the religious revival among their faithful and the reform of the Orthodox Church. They were involved in the construction of churches, educational and publishing activities, supporting the poor and the needy. They contributed to the increase in the level of education and religious awareness of the clergy and the faithful through the establishment of printing houses, schools, and the maintenance of teachers. In hospitals they took care of the poor, disabled, widows, and orphans. The privileged position of the stauropegic confraternities allowed them to exercise control over the Orthodox clergy, including the bishops. In addition to their religious activities, confraternities reformed the Orthodox Church and opposed the Uniate Church, created in 1596. What distinguished them from Catholic and Uniate confraternities was their political activity aimed at restoring the status of the Orthodox Church and gain equality with Catholics for the Orthodox population. Their efforts,

59 Lorenz, *Bractwa*, 175, 184–203; Mironowicz, *Bractwa*, 23.

which ended in success in 1633, were carried out within local communities, nationwide, at *sejms*, local *sejmiki*, and at the royal court.

The union of part of the Orthodox Church with the Catholic Church resulted in the emergence of a new player in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the Uniate Catholic Church, a Catholic alternative to the Eastern Orthodox Church. Because not all Orthodox churches joined the Catholic side, those that remained engaged in many disputes with the Uniates, especially over church property. Uniate confraternities concentrated on the renewal of sacramental life and the spread of the cult of the Virgin Mary and the saints. They did not engage in political activity, nor did they aspire to exercise control over the clergy. In ethnically diverse areas they cooperated with confraternities from other denominations, namely Catholic and Armenian, and jointly attended services, processions, and ingresses of state dignitaries.

13 Future Directions

There is much work still to be done on Orthodox and Uniate confraternities. First and foremost, while they have been the subject of many studies in Polish, there is still little available on them in other languages (especially in English or in French) for the wider academic community. Second, previous and current research seems mostly concerned with confraternities that operated in major cities and left a rich legacy of historical sources;⁶⁰ their counterparts in small towns and villages are still little known. Third, these studies focus disproportionately on the position and influence of the stauropегic confraternities that became the model for newly created confraternities.⁶¹ Fourth, the emphasis on urban and stauropегic confraternities is a result of the greater ease in accessing primary sources, that is, the documentation generated by the confraternities themselves, but also documents from the royal or the episcopal chancery, from parishes, and from the Basilian Order, as well as in visitation records and municipal archives (city books, wills). Some of these sources were published in the 19th and early 20th centuries, but there are still many that await publication.⁶² Fifth, there is very much a need to examine confraternities from small

60 Mironowicz, *Bractwa*; Beata Lorens, *Bractwa cerkiewne w eparchii przemyskiej w XVII–XVIII wieku* [*Orthodox Confraternities in the Eparchy of Przemyśl in the 16th–18th Centuries*] (Rzeszów: 2005); Jaroslav Isajevicz, *Voluntary Brotherhood: Confraternities of Laymen in Early Modern Ukraine* (Toronto: 2006).

61 Kempa, “Wileńskie bractwo,” 47–69.

62 *Monumenta Confraternitatis Stauropigianae*, vol. 1, wyd. W. Milkowicz (Leopoli: 1895); *Diplomata statutoria* (Leopoli: 1895); *Zbiór dawnych dyplomatów i aktów miast: Wilna*,

towns and villages. In their case, the lack of sources is often a major obstacle because they are few and scattered across various archives and fonds, making it difficult to assess them holistically, but modern research methods and instruments should help to overcome this last hurdle and encourage further research.

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Confraternities in Colonial New Spain: Mexico and Central America

Murdo J. MacLeod

1 Setting the Scene

Stretching from what is today the southwest of the United States all the way south and east to the approximate border between present-day Costa Rica and Panama, the Viceroyalty of New Spain, technically a separate kingdom under the Spanish crown but in fact a Spanish colony, was governed by a viceroy and a high court (*audiencia*) sitting in Mexico City. This vast territory contained several districts (also known as audiencias) such as Nueva Vizcaya or Nueva Galicia, with a certain amount of local autonomy. Two entities, while under the jurisdiction of the crown and its laws, were in most ways independent from the vice-regal authorities. The older was the Audiencia of Guatemala that, during the colonial period, included the present-day Mexican state of Chiapas and the territories of the six modern nations of Central America. Much later a military jurisdiction was carved out of the north of the viceroyalty and was known as the Provincias Internas (Interior Provinces). Under the larger jurisdictions, there were many lesser ones governed by *alcaldes mayores*, *corregidores*, and *gobernadores*. Town councils (*cabildos*) administered municipalities of all ethnicities. Apart from the capital, Mexico City, the largest of all by far, some cities such as Guadalajara, Puebla, and Santiago de Guatemala had substantial populations.

The main export of New Spain, both to Spain and to Asia via the Philippines, was bullion, extracted in large part from a series of silver mines north and west of Mexico City, some of which became important cities such as Guanajuato and San Luis Potosí. Other exports, far behind silver in quantity and value, included hides, indigo, cochineal, hardwoods and dyewoods, and cacao. The two ports of Veracruz on the Gulf of Mexico and Acapulco on the Pacific handled local and oceanic shipping. The local economy, mostly foodstuffs and textiles, was dominated by cattle and wheat, both Old World introductions, in the north and by maize and beans in the south. Sugar production and consumption and chocolate drinks, plus various beers and stronger alcohols, could be found everywhere.

2 The *Cofradía* in Colonial New Spain: An Introduction

As with many historical sources, the paucity of some, especially those more distant in time, causes problems and skews results. Poorer, transient, and unofficial confraternities were less likely to leave records, especially true of Indian ones in marginal areas. Climate, epidemics, and crop failures led to declines, both economic and demographic, and to inability to keep records. Shortages of priests meant that some were assigned to principal towns (*cabeceras*) with several subsidiary settlements (*anexos*), less frequently visited, especially over rugged terrain. So we are left with records tilted toward more recent, urban, wealthier, with higher memberships, and more Spanish confraternities, factors hard to overcome.

The Spanish invaders brought their *cofradías* (confraternities) with them. At first, membership was restricted to Spaniards, and these foundations were limited to hospitals and, a little later, to guilds of artisans. In the 1530s the number of Spanish *cofradías* increased rapidly. Gradually, it became clear that there was a need for more *cofradías*, with their support of conversion to the new state religion, saintly avocations, funeral insurance, and community solidarity among the other two recognised ethnicities.

The first black *cofradías*, both slave and free, began in the 1540s in Mexico City and the Veracruz coastal region. By the end of the century, these *cofradías* could be found in all the major cities and in smaller black settlements on both coasts. There was a delay, however, in the founding of large numbers of Indian confraternities. Initially, Indian populations were very large; conversions to the new faith were slow in some regions because of Indian resistance and a lack of friars. They were thought of as neophytes, children in the faith, and given to secret adherence to their previous beliefs. With the drastic fall in Indian populations in the first fifty years after the Spanish invasion, probably largely an immunological problem caused by the introduction of old world diseases such as smallpox, plague, and typhus, it became clear that a more precise management of Indian labour was needed for church and conventual building and maintenance, financial and devotional support of saintly avocations, and implantation of the faith, which were all urgent. As a result there was a wave of new Indian confraternities in the late 1560s and especially the 1570s. These new organisations were often welcomed with great enthusiasm by most Indians, a phenomenon that pleased some Spaniards and worried others.

By the 17th and 18th centuries, there were several thousand *cofradías* in New Spain. Mexico City alone had almost a thousand recognised Spanish *cofradías* by about 1750 and many more unofficial and transient ones. All black communities in the cities and smaller black settlements had founded two or

three *cofradías*, and Indian towns—whether large or small, they were officially known as *pueblos* (villages)—had between three and a dozen confraternities. The institution had become a central part of religious, political, and cultural life.

As the three colonial centuries advanced, miscegenation led to peoples of mixed ethnic heritage. Some *cofradías* adapted to this, although a few maintained ethnic divisions within them. By the end of the 18th century ethnic blending had proliferated so that in some areas mixed groups (*castas*) had become a majority, the far north and Veracruz areas being only two of many examples.

The intensive study of confraternities in New Spain is fairly recent. With a few notable exceptions, older histories tended to cover them in a few paragraphs or pages.¹ Various newer publications have attempted to catalogue New Spain's confraternity books and essays. Susan Webster produced a pioneer essay. More complete, with additional bibliographic descriptions, is the book collection by Teresa Eleazar Serrano Espinosa and Ricardo Jarillo Hernández. Most comprehensive of all is the bibliography at the end of the book coordinated by Eduardo Carrera, Clemente Cruz Peralta, José Antonio Cruz Rangel, and Juan Manuel Pérez y Zevallos. Many cathedral and national archives contain documentary collections on confraternities, some of them partially catalogued.²

3 Spanish *Cofradías*

The first Spanish confraternities in New Spain followed Spanish models. Hernán Cortés, the leader of the invading soldiers of fortune and their Indian

1 For example, Manuel Carrera Stampa, *Los gremios mexicanos: La organización gremial en Nueva España, 1521–1861* (Mexico City: 1954); a study of artisan guilds. More recent, and in some ways different, is María del Consuelo Maquiver, *Gremios y cofradías en la Nueva España* (Mexico City: 1996), which includes discussion on worker-state relationships and production of images and printed illustrations.

2 Susan Webster, "Research on Confraternities in the Colonial Americas," *Confraternitas* 9:1 (1998): 13–24; Eleazar Serrano Espinosa and Jarillo Hernández, *Las cofradías en México, pasado y presente; Descripción bibliográfica* (Mexico City: 2013); and *Las voces de la fé: Las cofradías en México, siglos XVII–XIX*, (eds.) Eduardo Carrera, Cruz Peralta, Cruz Rangel, and Pérez y Zevallos (Mexico City: 2011). Some cathedral archives make access difficult. One example of a useful but incomplete catalogue is Félix Alonso Gutiérrez and María José Esparza, *Guía del Fondo de Cofradías y Archicofradías* [en el Archivo General de la Nación, México] (Mexico City: 1989).

auxiliaries, founded the *cofradía* of the Caballeros de la Cruz (Knights of the Cross), perhaps around 1526 or, according to some, even before the smallpox epidemic and the fall of the Aztec capital of Tenochtitlan, renamed Mexico City. Cortés also founded the hospital confraternity of Nuestra Señora de la Inmaculada Concepción (Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception) in Mexico City, perhaps even earlier in 1524.

In the decades after the main conquests, most Spanish confraternities were attached to hospitals and colleges of regular friars, indicating an emphasis on sickness and the rituals surrounding death and funerals. Donations of alms, foodstuffs, and hospital supplies, plus, as time went on, investments in urban real estate, cattle haciendas, a type of loan called *censos*, and the income from funded chaplaincies (*capellanías*) all produced income.

While guild fraternities continued to flourish, there was a notable surge in the number of confraternities attached to specific chapels and churches and named after a saint or saints and holy avocations. These new confraternities shared some paradoxical features. In the larger cities, especially Mexico City, they often paid little heed to the stipulations of the Council of Trent or to the papal bulls of Clement VIII (1604) and Paul V (1610) which prohibited the establishment of any confraternity without approval from a royal official and the permission of the diocesan bishop or ordinary. Both were charged with formulating and then approving statutes and other regulations.³

These rules were frequently ignored by new confraternities, making many of them technically illegal but orthodox in statutes, social and religious functions and observances, and other behaviours. Such contradictions led to a certain degree of autonomy, including at times unsupervised elections of the yearly officeholders, failure to consult with the assigned friar or priest, and even to some financial or bookkeeping autonomy.⁴

As the first generations of Spaniards died leaving wills and *capellanías*, a few archconfraternities emerged in the Mexico City cathedral and monasteries of the regular orders, some with as many as eight or ten confraternities attached to them.⁵ In the late 16th and early 17th centuries, the number of confraternities of all ethnicities rose at a remarkable rate, and in the cities Spanish ones

3 For the Tridentine decrees on confraternities, see Juan Villegas, S.J., *Aplicación del Concilio de Trento en Hispano-américa, 1564-1600* (Montevideo: 1975); Fidel García Cuellar, "Política de Felipe II en torno a la convocación de la tercera etapa del Concilio Tridentino," *Hispania Sacra* 16:31 (1963): 25-60; and Reynerio Lebroc, "Proyección tridentina en América," *Missionalia Hispánica* 26:77 (1969): 129-267.

4 Alicia Bazarte Martínez, *Las cofradías de españoles en la ciudad de México, 1526-1860* (Mexico City: 1989): 31-33.

5 Bazarte Martínez, *Las cofradías*, 34, 141-167.

kept pace. Some grumbling about this, both from ecclesiastical and civil authorities, was heard. Too many new foundations had failed to apply for permission and statutes from the diocesan bishop or archbishop and from Spanish officials. Many had flourished almost autonomously and some had indulged in boisterous, unruly processions and drunken fiestas and dinners.⁶

Two notable, rich confraternities, with ancestral ties to a Basque-Navarrese confraternity, were the ones named for the Virgin of Aránzazu. Perhaps their resistance to outside interference was related to fierce Basque identity. More likely it came from established pre-Tridentine ingrained notions of taking care of their own affairs. The two *cofradías*, one in Mexico City and one in Lima, adopted different resistance strategies. The one in Lima chose to remain an *hermandad* (brotherhood) for some time, a looser and less prestigious entity in many cases, and thus less likely to attract the attention of civil or ecclesiastical intruders. The Mexican Aránzazu was more confrontational and insisted not only on the writing of its own rules, but also the right to freely elect its annual officeholders. The Archbishop of Mexico objected and a long legal dispute ensued, ending in a papal bull of 1766. The confraternity won.⁷

What is notable, however, is that these criticisms led to comparatively little action from the church or the state with regard to Spanish confraternities. It is interesting to compare this with the more frequent official attempts, as we shall see, to reduce the number of Indian confraternities, to supervise them far more closely, and to reduce their expenditures. All this was to change in the later 18th and early 19th centuries when the Bourbon monarchy's colonial lay authorities and the more "enlightened" New Spain bishoprics frontally attacked confraternities, especially their numbers and funds, and finally attempted to abolish them.⁸

In their heyday Spaniards of all classes, especially in urban centres, enthusiastically supported expanding numbers and memberships. Some of them, as already noted, adopted the names and holy avocations of their Spanish

6 Although his work concentrates on the mid and later 18th century, Francis Brooks is well aware of earlier tensions over *cofradía* flouting of the ecclesiastical and royal authority, and of official disapproval of excessive expenditures and of rowdy and drunken feasting and processions. See his "Parish and *Cofradía* in Eighteenth Century Mexico" (Ph.D. Diss: Princeton University, 1976), 35–38, 136–138. See also the following footnote.

7 Elisa Luque Alcaide, "Coyuntura social y *cofradía*: *Cofradías de Aránzazu de Lima y México*," in *Cofradías, capellanías y obras pías en la América colonial*, (eds.) María del Pilar Martínez López-Cano, Gisela von Wobeser, and Juan Guillermo Muñoz (Mexico City: 1998), 91–108.

8 To be discussed later, but for the moment see Clara García Aylluardo, (ed.), *Las reformas borbónicas, 1750–1805* (Mexico City: 2010).

ancestral regions so that we find confraternities of Basques, Navarrese, Galician, and others. Some identified with specific towns in Spain.⁹

Many Spanish confraternities in New Spain were ephemeral and lasted only a few years or decades. They were too small, poor, or neglected to survive. Others became wealthy in funds, *cofrades*, or lands and cattle, and attracted political and economic elites and leaders of various kinds. These people used confraternities as places to arrange marriages, *compadrazgos* (ritual co-parenthoods), exchanges of business information and contracts, endow chaplaincies for the souls of the departed in purgatory, preparing even for their own future demise, and to donate prestigious silver church ornaments and images, Chinese silks from Manila, and other valuables. All these arrangements, when publicly known, added to the donors' prestige and thus, indirectly, to capital and status. Among the wealthiest confraternities was one dedicated to the Most Holy Sacrament and Charity, the Basque one devoted to the Virgin of Aránzazu, another honouring the Holy Christ of Burgos, and one with the avocation of Saint Peter. Hacienda owners, silver mine owners and maritime merchants used their wealth to set up censos for good causes.¹⁰

At times, during the three colonial centuries, Mexico City housed hundreds of confraternities. Late in the colonial era, for example, there were some 951 official *cofradías* and *hermandades* in the city. An annotated catalogue lists some 80 to over 100 such organisations, depending on how they are counted, allowing us to make some generalisations.¹¹

Each confraternity could be identified by one or more holy patrons, to the cult of which the sodality was dedicated. Many had two or more patrons. The leading avocation by far was the Most Holy Sacrament (along with its procession and ceremonies of Corpus Christi), followed by the various avocations of the Virgin, of Jesus, and of the Holy Trinity, plus a good number dedicated to Souls in Purgatory. Much fewer had individual saints as patrons although many confraternities tended to add a saint at the end of their main cults. Saint Francis, Saint Dominic, and Saint Ignatius of Loyola received frequent mention. Among the favoured images in churches and in processions, few or none came

9 Bazarte Martínez, *Las cofradías*, 51–52.

10 Usury was illegal, so censos were a way of disposing of idle capital in return for regular payments. Repayment of the capital sum was not the main purpose, but rather a predictable regular income of 5 per cent. Institutions and individuals used this device, making them so loaded with censos that there was little prospect that the principal sums would ever be repaid.

11 Alicia Bazarte Martínez and Clara García Ayluardo, *Los costos de la salvación: Las cofradías y la ciudad de México, siglos XVI al XIX* (Mexico City: 2001), 124–432.

from the Old Testament; instead, images of the Virgin, Jesus, and the Holy Trinity predominated.

Many confraternities did not last long, relocated from one place, convent, or church to another, or moved to other cities such as Puebla or Querétaro. (The annotated list mentions two of blacks and mulattos, and a few of Indians.) Some were looser associations, members of congregations or third orders of secular clergy, and not, strictly speaking, confraternities. Guilds of tradesmen or artisans were common, for example, silversmiths, tailors, physicians, shoemakers, miners, and weavers. Archconfraternities accumulated dependent confraternities, some of them as many as ten. Most of them were attached to well-known churches of confraternities in Rome, with the church of Santa Maria Maggiore the most common. This connection was costly. In theory one large payment was usually sufficient, but many confraternities had to renew affiliation at fixed intervals such as every 25 years. Cofradías acquired indulgences of various kinds, some of them plenary. Others were attached to institutions or churches, and some were individual. A special burden was the Bula de la Santa Cruzada, granted by the papacy to the Spanish monarchy in order to help financially with the recovery of the Holy Land. The papacy issued these bulls from time to time, making their purchase compulsory, though often avoided. *Buleros* in charge of many jurisdictions profited greatly and several became rich and politically important. What was left of the funds collected disappeared into the royal treasury as a separate category. In short, it was an additional tax on confraternities.¹²

A few studies, some quite detailed, highlight individual confraternities in the city, but more are needed to offer a fuller picture of the complexity of a wide variety of these organisations.¹³ It is also clear that the people of the city chose or were given their patrons sometimes in very individual ways. Saint Homobono was the popular patron of about a dozen confraternities and inspired many engravings, paintings and prints. We can also see the rise in numbers of dedications to the Virgin of Guadalupe, eventually to become the patroness of Mexico. Saint Benedict the Moor became the named saintly patron of a few

12 For indulgences, see also Bazarte Martínez and García Ayluardo, *Los costos*, 66–82; and Ignacio Campiro Alatorre, *Las indulgencias, el “tesoro de la Iglesia”* (Guadalajara: 1992). The Bula de la Santa Cruzada was extended to the Spanish Indies in 1578 by Pope Gregory XIII. See María del Pilar Martínez López-Cano, “La administración de la Bula de la Santa Cruzada en Nueva España, 1574–1659,” *Historia Mexicana* 62:3 (2013): 975–1017.

13 For example, Asunción Lavrin, “La Congregación de San Pedro, una cofradía urbana del México colonial, 1600–1730,” *Historia Mexicana* 29 (April–June 1980): 562–601; and María Teresa Sepúlveda y Herrera, “La cofradía de San Nicolás Tolentino,” *Anales del Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia*, 1877–1977 (Mexico City: 1976): 5–22.

black confraternities long before he was proclaimed a saint in the 19th century. Saints Cosmos and Damian, early martyrs in Arabia, protected against illness, and their popularity plus processions appealing for their protection, seems to have surged in times of epidemics.

The Dominican order promoted the prayer of the Rosary which, it is asserted, became the most common prayer in New Spain. Confraternities dedicated to the Rosary were often linked to ones of Souls in Purgatory. Rosary confraternities soon appeared in Oaxaca, Querétaro, Puebla, Guadalajara, and wherever Dominicans established monasteries. Those named after the Baby Jesus were surprisingly few—only one appears on the list used here—in spite of the importance of the image in Madrid. Saint Barbara, patroness of artillery, gunpowder, and miners, probably a mythical saint, was also popular, as was the Archangel Raphael, who guarded against illness, especially blindness. A few very specialised confraternities existed, among them the Confraternity and Brotherhood of the Most Holy Crucifix and Washing of Jesus, attached to the convent of Santa Clara. Its membership was limited to traders with the Manila galleons, popularly known as the “*cofradía de los chinos*.”¹⁴

The second rank of Spanish cities—Puebla, Guadalajara, and Santiago de Guatemala (now Antigua Guatemala)—lack the detailed lists so helpful to understanding these organisations in Mexico City. There is a standard account backed by documents from two parishes in Puebla, including statutes, income, and costs, ecclesiastical visits to the two parishes, and elections of officers. More unique, perhaps, is a study of Puebla *capellanías*, endowments that supported the salary of a priest, charged with celebrating masses for the salvation of the soul of the person who gave the endowment (or founder). Many of them subsidised a fixed number of masses per year for a stated period or in perpetuity. These chaplaincies grew to be especially numerous in the last years of the colonial era and were often intended to help the soul of the donor lessen its time in Purgatory. They constituted an important portion of church income and provided a salary for many clerics. The rise in chaplaincies correlated closely with the increase of confraternities of “Souls in Purgatory.” A close link existed between funding a chaplaincy and joining one or more confraternities.

14 This discussion is extracted from the list mentioned in footnote 11, but see also for Saints Cosmos and Damian, Alicia Bazarte Martínez, “La Cofradía de Cosme y Damián en el siglo XVIII,” *Fuentes Humanísticas* 18:10 (1999): 46–53; and for the history of the Rosary in New Spain, Alejandra González Leyva, “La devoción del Rosario en Nueva España: Historia, cofradías, advocaciones, obras de arte, 1538–1640” (M.A. thesis, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México: 1992).

A short table provides information on some 13 *cofradías* involved in charity work for the poor.¹⁵

According to one 19th-century source in 1746 Puebla's parishes and neighbourhoods had 48 confraternities, but only a small number were exclusively Spanish. Notable was the one dedicated to the Rosary, as one would expect to be found in the convent of Santo Domingo. One history of colonial Puebla emphasises the roles of the *cabildo* or city government and, to a much lesser extent the presence of guilds. Confraternities in Puebla await their historian.¹⁶ Immigrants to Puebla from Brihuega in Spain, from one textile town to another, played important roles in the development of their new home. As they made money they sent some of it back to Brihuega, endowing *obras pías*, dowries, and other charities, plus various *cofradías*. The same pattern continued in Puebla as the immigrants accumulated some wealth, with emphasis on endowing *colegios* (schools) and convents. They also joined confraternities in Puebla and founded capellanías for children who had become priests and nuns. Those who joined local confraternities used them as a way of integrating into local society and participating in its rituals. Notable, however, was the fact that apart from money sent back to Brihuega, the immigrants did little to perpetuate the rites and avocations they grew up with, but rather adapted to and joined established Puebla sodalities.¹⁷

Few studies focus exclusively on confraternities in colonial Guadalajara, but one excellent study of the 17th-century interplay between power, religion, and society includes a discussion about the role of *cofradías*.¹⁸ Part of this same book examines wills left by *cofrades*, among others, donating to churches, confraternities, and chaplaincies to say masses for the souls of the departed. All this, however, was tempered by a notable desire to balance the passing on of

15 For the *cofradías* in the two Puebla parishes, see Elisa Garzón Balbuena, *Guía de cofradías de las parroquias del Santo Ángel Custodio y San José de la ciudad de Puebla, siglos XVII–XX* (Mexico City: 2012). For chaplaincies, *obras pías*, and other charities in Puebla, there are two studies: Francisco Javier Cervantes Bello, "Las capellanías en la Puebla de los Angeles: Una apreciación a través de los censos, 1511–1630," and Rosalva Loreto López, "La caridad y sus personajes: Las obras pías de Don Diego Sánchez Peláez y Doña Isabel de Herrera Peregrina, Puebla, siglo XVIII," both in Martínez López-Cano, von Wobeser, and Muñoz, *Cofradías, Capellanías*, 173–190 and 263–280, respectively.

16 Frances L. Ramos, *Identity, Ritual and Power in Colonial Puebla* (Tucson: 2012).

17 Ida Altman, *Transatlantic Ties in the Spanish Empire, Brihuega, Spain, and Puebla, Mexico, 1560–1620* (Stanford: 2000).

18 Thomas Calvo, *Poder, religión y sociedad en la Guadalajara del siglo XVII* (Mexico: 1992), Chapter 6. For a rambling contemporary account of the city and district, see Matías Mota Padilla, *Historia del Reino de Nueva Galicia en la América Septentrional* (reprint of 1742 edition).

wealth and care for souls with an urge to leave cash to the poor, the infirm, and to needy relatives. Some wills even discuss the need to reduce masses for one's soul because of the equal or greater needs of the living poor. The author also finds a decisive date to be approximately 1640, when wills leave, in addition to money, more artefacts such as images, religious jewellery and ornaments, precious carpeting, and textiles to churches, hospitals, convents, and confraternities.

From this same study we also learn that in the 17th century Guadalajara had some 20 confraternities, congregations, and third orders of Franciscans and Dominicans. Of the approximately 15 confraternities, the most important were those dedicated to Blessed Souls in Purgatory, the Virgin of Solitude, the Holy Blood of Christ, and Our Lady of the Rosary, prompting us to note the relative absence of those devoted to individual saints. Rural *cofradías* in the area were Indian and the ones in the city mostly Spanish. Many elite Spaniards belonged to several confraternities, nine in one notable case. Those dedicated to the Most Blessed Sacrament and the Virgin of Solitude enjoyed the most wealth and exclusive patronage. The author concludes this discussion by noting that around 1730 enthusiasm for confraternity life seemed to wane, being redirected toward more support for educational institutions teaching orthodox religion. Remarkably this occurred before the direct attacks by civil and religious authorities on the finances, activities, and finally the very existence of these organisations.

Santiago de Guatemala was a city surrounded by a sea of Indian towns especially in the early colonial period. In spite of the catastrophic decline of the native population, one would have expected its Spanish population to establish several confraternities. We have very little information on this history of lay religion; part of the problem is that much of the past half century of scholarship has concentrated on other topics. The National Archives of Central America contain some of the appropriate materials, but the cathedral archives, which house a large collection called "*cofradías*," have been difficult of access to all but a few researchers. When open sporadically, hours are limited. The archive of the cathedral proper, which contains documents pertaining to it as a parish, rarely opens to the public.

One great exception to these difficulties has been the publication of a series of episcopal *visitas* or inspections arranged by Mexican authorities cooperating with those in the Guatemalan cathedral involved in such matters. Some of these archbishops wrote detailed descriptions of Indian pueblos, their churches, prelates, number of faithful, and confraternities. Most of this material has to do with Indian society or black and mestizo populations, with little discussion of Spaniards. Unfortunately, although the editing and commentary

analysis are excellent, new demographic or ecclesiastical studies have not yet emerged.¹⁹

What of lesser Spanish or heavily Spanish or creole settlements? These are so numerous that, at the moment, it may be appropriate to study a typical settlement for various categories. Guanajuato was a silver mining town, subject to “boom and bust,” the inflows and outflows of contracted or forced labour, and to the brawling, rough and ready natives of many mining towns. Some of its confraternities joined in, dismissing members and electing others to offices without much heed to local clerics or bishops. Several Guanajuato confraternities seem to have functioned illegally, that is without official permissions throughout their existence. They also posed some resistance to clerical attempts to scrutinise accounts, elections, and other books.

One of the confraternities studied is that of the Most Holy Trinity, a guild of tailors. Two others, the Blessed Souls in Purgatory and Saint Nicholas Tolentino were related to miners and mining. In 1792, mineworkers totalled more than 50 per cent of the working inhabitants of Guanajuato where ten other *cofradías* seem to have existed. Here we come across the credit or lending function of confraternities, perhaps not as significant in non-mining areas. Records of the *cofradías* in Guanajuato display more or less a balance between income and expenses; only a few had the capacity to lend out to *cofrades*.²⁰

The possession, usufruct, and economics of land were of first importance in the agrarian, largely rural society that characterised the three colonial centuries of New Spain. The Spaniards there, from conquest until well after Mexican and Central American independence, quickly understood that the seizure, purchase, rent, or usufruct of land constituted an essential priority. The initial conquests led by Hernán Cortés, Nuño de Guzmán, Pedro de Alvarado, and others simply seized and distributed *solares*, or simple household plots, in the newly established Spanish cities, the most prestigious near the city centres. Just outside the settlements, *ejidos* or communal lands were created, often used for

19 *Memoria eclesial guatemalteca: Visitas pastorales*, (ed.) Mario Ruz, 4 vols to date (Mexico City: 2002–2008). There are some description of Spanish *cofradías* in the cities of the area. For a study of a *cofradía* in Santiago de Guatemala (now Antigua), consult Gerardo Ramírez Samayoa, “La *cofradía* de la Santa Cruz y la hermandad de Jesús Nazareno de la ermita de la Santa Cruz del Milagro en Santiago de Guatemala, 1701–1780,” *Anales de la Academia de Geografía e Historia de Guatemala* 85 (2010): 117–158.

20 José Vidaurre Aréchiga, *Las cofradías de Guanajuato en la época colonial: El espíritu religioso de Guanajuato en el siglo XVIII* (Guanajuato: 1999). For information on another mining city, see Dana Velasco Murillo, *Urban Indians in a Silver City: Zacatecas, Mexico, 1546–1810* (Stanford: 2016). Her views on Indian confraternities there will be discussed later in this article.

grazing or, in the first stages, as sources for tinder, hay, or building materials. There was little or no interest in, or discussion of compensating the previous communal or individual Indian owners—these lands were simply seized and apportioned. Next in the sequence of land concessions came vice-regal grants called *mercedes* to Spaniards and sometimes members of the Indian nobility; these were generally recognised as official confirmation of ownership.

As Indian populations fell, much of the emptied land became crown property or *tierras baldías* (roughly, vacant crown lands). Spaniards acquired title to swathes of these “vacant” lands upon payment of small fees. When the reduced Indian villages sought legal compensation, pointing out that such lands complemented settlement-owned cultivated or grazing areas by providing hunting and gathering, timber for housing, thatch, and hay, Spanish judges, whose tradition saw land as a productive commodity for crops and animals, often rejected Indian claims and awarded the Spanish petitions.

Spaniards also simply seized land, taking advantage of the always financially starved crown as a way of making such land grabs legal. Using *composición* (*de tierras*), a state device for accepting payment in return for “quiet” or legal titles, Spaniards could simply wait for the next round of *composición* that took place, somewhat predictably, when the next royal financial crisis surfaced. Indian pueblos also rented out lands they no longer needed or sought some income, or both. Some long-term renters would then attempt to seize or purchase these lands, claiming rights of usufruct. After lengthy litigation, some pueblos succeeded in defending ownership. As native population grew in the late 17th century, and especially in the late 18th, Indian settlements, by this time surrounded by Spanish haciendas, fought one another, sometimes physically, over boundaries. These were frequently marked by rocks, easily moved, or by items such as trees, easily cut down.²¹

In all these systems of land acquisition, use, and legal entanglements, confraternities were at times involved, sometimes on both sides of a dispute. In the 18th century authorities in Indian towns frequently quarrelled with their local priest who had made claims of his own to local lands.²²

Many Spanish confraternities existed in regions that were predominantly indigenous for all three colonial centuries. Not all the Spanish confraternities

21 Charles Gibson, *The Aztecs under Spanish Rule: A History of the Indians of the Valley of Mexico, 1519–1810* (Stanford: 1964), 257–299. For a specific example outside the central valley of Mexico, see Ernesto de la Torre Villar, “Algunos aspectos de las cofradías y la propiedad territorial en Michoacán,” *Jahrbuch für die Geschichte von Staat, Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft Lateinamerikas* 4 (1967): 410–439.

22 William B. Taylor, *Magistrates of the Sacred: Priests and Parishioners in Eighteenth-Century Mexico* (Stanford: 1996). See the chapter entitled “Cofradías,” 301–323, especially 316–323.

were prosperous; their crops or domesticated animals varied by geography and, to an extent, by custom and availability of labour and markets. In a few areas, such as Yucatán, Spanish confraternity lands were few in number, while Indians, instead, owned quite large estates.²³

One method of gaining access to Spanish land information is by examining the loans given out by Spanish confraternities. In the case of the Valley of Toluca, there were three parishes including the town of Toluca the regional capital. The area remained overwhelmingly Indian and in many ways dependent on Mexico City. The most important Spanish confraternity in the region was one dedicated to the Most Holy Sacrament. Unlike Mexico City, most were predominantly rural, poorer than urban ones, and closely connected in membership and finance to the local *cajas de comunidades* or community chests, which were supposed to finance public works such as church repairs, keeping wells and streets reasonably clean, paying local fees and taxes.

After a hundred or more years of population decline, epidemics, and intermittent droughts, the Toluca confraternities enjoyed relative prosperity for over a century beginning around 1650 or a few decades later. Unlike many urban areas where the church was the main credit institution, in Toluca Spanish confraternities performed this role. Many of them were now headed by *mayordomos* or stewards and began to be dominated by certain families or clans. Some bishops, especially Francisco de Aguilar y Seijas, deplored “feasts, plays, bullfights, dances, and similar events of no utility,” that created more funds for other purposes, such as credit. Most of the censos (short-term loans) were for land improvements or crops, secured by a house or houses, lands, rarely maguey cacti or cattle, and once by a windmill. Much of the borrowing emanated from members of the confraternity granting the loan; thus leverage could be employed against delinquents on loans, and most *cofrades* enjoyed reputations of solvency. Loans tended to be quite small and frequently short-term, a micro-credit system for members—loans that the official church, even if petitioned, was unlikely to grant. Thus we find that most landholdings were small or medium, that the main products were maize, cattle, and maguey cactus, and that confraternities constituted the main source of credit, long-term censos or smaller amounts for a year or less.²⁴

23 Discussed frequently in Nancy M. Farriss, *Maya Society under Colonial Rule: The Collective Enterprise of Survival* (Princeton: 1984). See also her “Propiedades territoriales en Yucatán en la época colonial en algunas observaciones acerca de la pobreza española y la autonomía indígena,” in *Los pueblos de indios y las comunidades*, (ed.) Bernardo García Martínez (Mexico City: 1991), 125–180.

24 Karen Ivett Mejía Torres, *Las cofradías en el valle de Toluca y su relación con el crédito, 1794–1809* (Mexico City: 2014), citation from 109, my translation. See also James Lockhart,

In 1789 a local Spanish official conducted a census of all the settlements in western Michoacán, finding a total of 105 pueblos and cities, the vast majority Indian. A few, including the city of Pátzcuaro, held an indigenous majority, but also a large Spanish, mestizo, and mulatto minority. Three settlements were entirely inhabited by people officially classified as mulatto, and another three were majority or entirely Spanish. In short, in the late 18th century, Michoacán was overwhelmingly Indian. (Several provinces, including Yucatán, Oaxaca, Chiapas, and Guatemala, were even more “native” in population).²⁵

In spite of these demographic realities, several Spanish confraternities flourished in Michoacán. Some dated from the 17th and early 18th centuries. A few, founded by Franciscans, the dominant order in the region, contained both Indian and Spanish cofrades, and some of the new ones became attached to churches rather than Franciscan hospitals. In the second half of the 18th century some haciendas owned by or rented to Spanish confraternities began to encroach on Indian pueblos that were gradually reviving from the early dreadful epidemics. Some Indians abandoned their pueblos which then leased their vacant lands to Spaniards and tried to live off the rents. Small and medium landowners borrowed from Spanish confraternities. Three large estates came to dominate, one owned by the Jesuit order, one by a Spanish confraternity, and the third individually owned, but heavily in debt to Spanish cofradías.

Although Spaniards were a small population minority, by the first half of the 18th century a quarter of the confraternities were Spanish. Two of them were archconfraternities and considered to be wealthy. In general, official or “legal” confraternities tended to be wealthier. Even the richest Indian cofradías were poorer than the poorest Spanish ones. Indian confraternities concentrated on cattle and horses. Few raised mules, but those that did had large numbers, suggesting that they controlled the business of cargoes and transportation. Spanish confraternities grew crops, but above all extended credit and rented out lands.

“Spaniards among Indians: Toluca in the Later Sixteenth Century,” in his *Nahuas and Spaniards: Postconquest Central Mexican History and Philology* (Stanford: 1991): 202–242.

25 For Yucatán see note 23 above. For Central American colonial populations, see Murdo J. MacLeod, “An Outline of Central American Colonial Demographies: Sources, Yields, and Possibilities,” in *The Historical Demography of Highland Guatemala*, (eds.) Robert M. Carmack, John Early and Cristopher Lutz (Albany, NY: 1982), 3–18. For Oaxaca, see María de los Angeles Romero Frizzi, “The Indigenous Population of Oaxaca from the Sixteenth Century to the Present,” in *The Cambridge History of the Native Peoples of the Americas*, vol. 2, *Mesoamerica*, Part 2, (eds.) Richard E.W. Adams and Murdo J. MacLeod (Cambridge, UK: 2000), 302–345, especially 350–351.

Late colonial confraternities of all ethnicities grew more “political” with active officials and closer relations to town and city councils. Village priests became more dependent on their confraternities for their income. Various crown decrees attempted to seize confraternity lands and savings, sometimes doggedly resisted. These battles especially dried up sources for small and medium credit seekers.²⁶

4 Black Cofradías

Archbishop Gonzalo de Mena y Roelas took up his diocese, Seville, in 1393. Until his death in 1401 his jurisdiction was wracked by anti-Jewish pogroms, crop failures, floods, and epidemics. In these circumstances Mena y Roelas founded the hospital and “hermandad de los negros.” This, Isidro Moreno tells us, was the ethnic Andalusian model that was transplanted to colonial Spanish America from the 16th century onwards. In 1554 the confraternity, by this time under the patronage of Our Lady of the Three Magi (Nuestra Señora de los Reyes Magos)—one of the three kings has traditionally been considered to be black—had gained approval of its statutes (*reglas*), which were then frequently used as a basic template for black confraternities in the Spanish colonies. With a few additions and deletions these lasted in the Sevillian confraternity into the 20th century.²⁷

Although precise years of founding for the first black and mulatto confraternities have not been established, a few appear to date from the 1540s. At first many blacks were described as *bozales* or first-generation immigrants from Africa, nearly always slaves. (The term was also applied less often to non-aculturated people, especially those who had learned little or no Spanish). Blacks born in the Americas were usually called *criollos*, but the most common categorisations fell under the rubrics of slave or free, and blacks or mulattos. Taken as a whole, however, they lived in a variety of communities and circumstances so complex that they defied simple categories. By mid-17th

26 Dagmar Bechtloff, *Las cofradías en Michoacán durante la época de la colonia: La religión y su relación política y económica en un sociedad intercultural*, trans. Joaquín Francisco Zaballa Omaña (Zinacantepec, Mexico: 1996). Much of the preceding account comes from this book, but see also Torre Villar, “Algunos aspectos.” For a detailed discussion of the early hospital and mining confraternities, see Celia Islas Jiménez, “La iglesia y las cofradías de Tlalpujahua en la época colonial,” *Apuntes de Etnohistoria 11* (Cuadernos de trabajo) 5 (Mexico City: 1992), 147–162.

27 Isidro Moreno, *La antigua Hermandad de los Negros de Sevilla: Etnicidad, poder y sociedad en 600 años de historia* (Seville: 1997).

century those classified as black or mulatto constituted the overwhelming majority in Veracruz and its environs while smaller enclaves populated areas of the Pacific coast.²⁸ In the early 17th century, about 5,000 of approximately 6,000 inhabitants in the Veracruz coastal area were black or mulatto.²⁹

Some of the earliest confraternities in Mexico City may have been part of the evangelisation process. An early mention (1560) of black confraternities in the capital referred to the confraternity of St Nicholas Tolentino in the church of the Santa Vera Cruz. Other 16th-century foundations included Nuestra Señora de la Concepción, attached to the hospital of the same name, and the bluntly named Morenos de San Benito, originally connected to the church of Santa María la Redonda. Its formal name was La Coronación de Cristo Nuestro Señor y San Benito. Many more black confraternities appeared throughout New Spain in the 17th century, especially in urban areas, including large and small mining camps.³⁰

As was usual for confraternities with ethnic identities, black confraternities adopted standard names: avocations of the Virgin, of Jesus, and of the Holy Sacrament, as well as mythical and real saints of African origin, such as Saint Benedict the Moor (San Benito de Palermo, a Sicilian black), Saint Ephigenia (a first-century Ethiopian), Saint Martin de Porres (a colonial black Peruvian) and, very popular, Saint Nicholas of Tolentino, an Italian whose African antecedents, if any, remain obscure. Many of the early black confraternities were attached to hospitals founded by the regular orders, especially Franciscans and Dominicans. Later, they could more often be found as part of specific churches or monastic and conventual institutions.

All of them shared some common features of colonial confraternities, such as the care of the sick and the poor along with cooperative funeral masses and burials. They had formal constitutions or statutes. The institutional regimen involved monthly dues and sometimes entrance fees, plus expulsions for long-term lapses in payments. All black confraternities celebrated most of the major feast days of the church plus the day of their named saint or avocation. As

28 Antonio García de León, *Tierra adentro, mar en fuera: El Puerto de Veracruz y su litoral a Sotavento, 1519–1821* (Veracruz: 2011), 536–544; 549–573.

29 Adriana Naveda Chávez Hita, *Esclavos negros en las haciendas azucareras de Córdoba, Veracruz, 1690–1830* (Veracruz: 1987).

30 A good summary of the founding of these early Mexico City black *cofradías* is Cristina Verónica Masferrer León, “Por las ánimas de negros bozales: Las *cofradías* de personas de origen africano en la ciudad de México (siglo XVII),” *Cuicuilco* 18:51 (2011): 1–13. The author relies primarily upon several standard publications, especially Nicole von Germeten, *Black Blood Brothers: Confraternities and Social Mobility for Afro-Mexicans* (Gainesville: 2006), who lists many “Afro-Mexican” confraternities in towns across Mexico.

with all confraternities, they participated in processions and communal feasts, and underwent supervised annual elections of officers as well as inspections of confraternity records, including income and expense accounts. Most black confraternities were urban and depended upon the solicitation of alms, donations, monthly fees, and investments.³¹

In black confraternities women usually outnumbered men, especially in the 17th and early 18th centuries. They seldom, however, occupied leadership roles except in the task of caring for the sick. In a very few cases mulatto women became *mayordomas* (leaders); Afro-Mexican women tended to have more access to leadership roles in mining towns.³²

Colonial black confraternities embodied by their inherent nature a series of paradoxes that produced both great advantages and serious problems. As with all confraternities, they encouraged communal and spiritual cohesion and stimulation, support for the cult of the saints, insurance against destitution and illness, a funeral society, a limited credit source, ethnic and sometimes class identity, and opportunities for public celebrations via processions, religious ceremonies, and group feasting and drinking. Sometimes they created via election to offices and other advantages a certain degree of social mobility for some individuals.³³

On the other hand, the members were slaves or descended from slaves, and so they belonged to an ethnicity considered by the dominant socio-political system to be culturally inferior. These elite sectors, mostly white or whitish, exploited blacks and, to an extent, lived off their labour. One of the results was the traditional and chronic colonial anxiety and fear of sedition and revolt from below. (These anxieties took somewhat different forms vis-à-vis the Indian populations, but were generically the same.) As a result, black confraternities, contributing as they did to Christianisation, to a sense of belonging to the larger society and, perhaps, to outlets for companionship and entertainment, could also fuel apprehension on the part of elites. Could this confraternity

31 See, for example, María Teresa Sepúlveda, "La cofradía de San Nicolás Tolentino," *Anales del Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia* 54 (1976): 5–22. The best description to date of a colonial black confraternity, this one from colonial Veracruz, is found in Estela Roselló Soberón, "La cofradía de negros: Una ventana a la tercera raíz. El caso de San Benito de Palermo," (Licentiate thesis, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México: 1998). It contains a partial list of black and mulatto confraternities in 17th-century New Spain cities (p. 2).

32 Von Germeten, *Black Blood Brothers*, Chapter 2.

33 Using wills, Nicole von Germeten has found a few black confraternity officials who achieved elite status and considerable wealth. See her "Routes to Respectability: Confraternities and Men of African Descent in New Spain," in *Local Religion in Colonial Mexico*, (ed.) Martin Austin Nesvig (Albuquerque: 2006), 215–233.

cohesion and ethnic identification not also result in resentment at their inferior position and thus in hostility and even revolt?

In 1608, the black population of Mexico City became agitated by the death and burial of an elderly black woman who, her master claimed, had died of illness, but was believed by many to have died of abuse. A noisy crowd began to march through the streets causing homeowners to shut doors and windows and to abandon both markets and stores. For a while tensions abated, but rumours persisted and a prominent black confraternity fell under suspicion. Wariness also arose from the presence of outlawed black settlements along the routes between Mexico City and the Gulf coast. In 1612, these rumours became more specific. Confraternities of blacks allegedly intended to elect a black king and queen to govern, kill all whites, and enslave local Indians. Various street disturbances prompted severe repression. Many black leaders were hanged in the main square and six were drawn and quartered. The authorities banned or restricted black confraternities and some remained under vigilance as late as 1668.³⁴

5 Indian Cofradías

During the three colonial centuries in New Spain, the native American or Indian population easily outnumbered the combined total of all other ethnic groups. Of course, this demographic count varied by region and by time, with some places overwhelmingly indigenous to this day. Many Indian foundations disappeared, at least from written records, others established themselves officially or unofficially in enthusiastic waves. A quick and very impressionistic survey of the number of Indian cofradías at any given time soon reaches the thousands. Given these numbers, an overview of them using small samples or individual studies of these organisations are useful but may not grasp the debates in or about colonial Indian confraternities. Several large debates or generalisations about Indian society and the confraternities, however, may lead us to a better understanding of their roles and histories.

The early history of colonial Indian cofradías has enlisted few scholars. Of these, two leading authorities have come to different conclusions. Charles

34 Von Germeten, *Black Blood Brothers*, 72–77. See also Joan Cameron Bristol, *Christians, Blasphemers and Witches: Afro-Mexican Ritual Practice in the Seventeenth Century* (Albuquerque: 2007), 93–102. Several other accounts vary in details. Bristol also discusses in several places white fears of African witchcraft imported by black slaves. Another riot by black slaves is discussed briefly in Laura A. Lewis, *Hall of Mirrors: Power, Witchcraft and Caste in Colonial Mexico* (Durham, NC: 2003), 90.

Gibson, in his magnificent study of Indian society in the central valley of Mexico, decided that a few Indian confraternities came into being in that area before the late 1560s and that this delay was overcome by more confraternities at the end of that decade and by a veritable flood of new ones in the 1570s. In seeking to explain this periodisation, Gibson points out that the population of this area and its capital city Tenochtitlan/Tlatelolco (later Mexico City) was large and the number of Spanish friars and clerics very small in these early years. The local population, barely converted to the faith and in some areas still barely contacted, could not be trusted with lay, somewhat autonomous, European style religious institutions. In the frequently used phrase, Indians were “children in the faith.”

These situations changed drastically after the first smallpox epidemic helped Cortés and his men to capture the Aztec capital. Waves of *matlazahuatl*, possibly typhus or plague, drastically lowered the Indian population, and a new devastating outbreak in the 1570s reduced it to a small remnant of what it had been half a century before. Local clergy and urban bishops saw this as both an unfortunate necessity and a great financial and political opportunity.

Many Indians became Catholics, at least publicly orthodox. Pueblo priests and conventual institutions, many in need of labour and too poor to buy scarce black slaves, became concerned at the lack of a workforce needed to sustain church and monastery buildings, grounds, and supplies of daily needs. The solution was to better organise the remaining Indian population, and confraternities were one result. Moreover, to the surprise of some clerical commentators, and with the doubts and suspicions of others, indigenous peoples showed widespread enthusiasm for these new institutions and enrolled in great numbers. They also supplied the labour to build additional chapels dedicated to specific avocations while priestly stipends and fees for masses, confirmations, weddings, and funerals supported curates. Churches and confraternities provided a means for former indigenous polities to preserve some political autonomy in new jurisdictions; confraternity members could reinforce communal solidarity, defend their ethnic identities, and conserve some aspects of pre-Columbian culture. For the clergy, the Indian *cofradía* offered a means for ensuring a steady church income from a reduced population. Thus, the last quarter of the 16th century and the entire “long 17th century” that continued until the late 1730s became the great age of the Indian confraternity, even during the economic difficulties of the middle years of the 17th century.

Dagmar Bechtloff, in her thorough study of Michoacán's colonial confraternities, politely begs to differ with the above periodisation and suggests a quite different chronology from that of Gibson and others. Her emphasis when describing the early years after Spanish church expansion in the province is to pay most attention to conversion to Christianity and to the role of the Franciscans

and the saintly bishop Vasco de Quiroga in the founding of hospitals. She suggests an expansion of these confraternities in the 1530s and 40s, followed by an epidemic disaster in the 1560s and 70s, leading to the abandonment of many early confraternities. Then in the later 16th century and throughout the 17th, a new expansion similar to that discussed by Gibson occurred.

Two groups of possible reasons for the divergent discussion of the 16th-century periodisation of early Indian confraternity founding can be advanced. The most obvious is that the two regions were very dissimilar in their populations of both Indians and Spanish clergy. In other words, both authors may be accurate within the regions they studied. Another possibility is that while Bechtloff has plenty of overall data for the 18th century, her description of the founding of Indian confraternities before about 1550 is mostly confined to individual examples and the total is not great.³⁵

The transition from some pre-conquest socio-political organisations such as the *altepetl* and its subdivision the *calpolli* have received detailed attention. Their relationship to the Spanish *encomienda* and then to the settlement of *cabeceras* and their satellites, *visitas*, *anexos*, or *parcialidades* is well established.³⁶ The confraternity, obviously in its formal sense a Catholic and Spanish introduction, is less understood in its post-conquest manifestations. Perhaps, a few have proposed, confraternities tended to become more important as pervasive institutions where the *altepetl* was less developed as a basic unit of ethnic organisation. This suggests that there may be a tie between *cofradías* and *altepetl* in fulfilling similar social functions. What remains unanswered is the great surge of enthusiasm on the part of Indian societies for inventing and joining confraternities that took place, as far as is known, both where the *altepetl* was well developed and where it was not. There may be no quick solution to these questions of confraternity origins in the late 16th century, but research into numbers of confraternities in varied regions, and possible different roles played in compared areas, would provide more information.³⁷

35 Bechtloff, *Las cofradías*. In table 2, 101, the author lists only two *cofradías* up to 1540. For her disagreement with Gibson and her periodisation, see 217–219. See Gibson, *The Aztecs*, 127–153, for a discussion of early foundings. Two more recent studies arrive at a general picture similar to that of Gibson: James Lockhart, *The Nahuas after the Conquest: A Social and Cultural History of the Indians of Central Mexico, Sixteenth through Eighteenth Centuries* (Stanford: 1992), 538–539; and Taylor, *Magistrates of the Sacred*, 303. Lockhart mentions (p. 205), that in the period 1535–40 many Indians were still unbaptized in the Cuernavaca jurisdiction.

36 Lockhart, *The Nahuas*, 15–58.

37 Lockhart, *The Nahuas*, 219, following John K. Chance and William B. Taylor, “Cofradías and Cargos: An Historical Perspective on the Mesoamerican Civil-Religious Hierarchy,” *American Ethnologist* 12 (1985): 1–26; and Farriss, *Maya Society*, thinks the *cofradía* developed more in peripheral areas where the *altepetl* and its variants were weaker.

Unlike black confraternities, Indian ones had no saints of their own ethnicity for most of the colonial period. Their new confraternities, therefore, customarily followed Spanish avocations such as the Most Holy Sacrament, Souls in Purgatory, the Virgin of the Rosary and later of Guadalupe, and the Holy Cross. Among saints one has the impression that Saint Francis was the one most often favoured. The Holy Sacrament confraternity was almost obligatory in many parishes and, when some confraternities in the late 18th century were amalgamated into one, the one dedicated to the Most Holy Sacrament survived.³⁸

Studies of indigenous material and cultural adaptations and continuances during the three centuries of Spanish colonialism have interested many scholars. Great regional and temporal variation existed in the sequence and types of persistence and change. After a time, larger European domesticated animals dramatically altered indigenous diets, transportation, and to a lesser extent clothing. Cattle, horses, mules, pigs, and new domesticated fowls became common throughout New Spain, with some regional variation in such factors as climate and altitude. Cheeses, beef jerky, eggs and, to an apparently lesser extent, Old World fruits and vegetables, entered the diet. Hides provided horse and mule tackle and some items of clothing and furniture.³⁹

Confraternities played a role in these changes. In many parts of Mexico some of them became the owners of large herds of cattle, horses, and mules. In the highlands of Chiapas and Guatemala a few confraternities raised herds of sheep. In general, one has the impression that communal pueblo Indian landholdings were more important than confraternity lands, flocks, and herds.⁴⁰

Changes in culture and religion have stimulated more interest today. In polytheistic Indian societies accustomed to intermittent warfare, it was of course usual for the defeated groups to incorporate the deities of the winners into their pantheon. These numerous deities often included venerated, heroic, and sometimes mythical ancestors, a saintly equivalent no doubt. The first groups of friars, especially the Franciscans, contributed to the ease of religious changes by building their churches on the sites of demolished temples, using the platforms and stones for the new church. Here, we have a clear symbol of conquest, but also a continuing recognition of the sacred nature of the site.

The first Spanish conquerors disposed of the rulers of large entities or empires by accusing them of idolatry and recidivism. Thus Cuauhtémoc and

38 Taylor, *Magistrates of the Sacred*, 302–303.

39 Arnold J. Bauer, *Goods, Power, History: Latin American Material Culture* (Cambridge, UK: 2001); Alfred W. Crosby, *The Columbian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492* (Westport, CN: 1972).

40 Among the many examples of this difference, see Cheryl English Martin, *Rural Society in Colonial Morelos* (Albuquerque: 1985), 71–112, 165, 184–185.

Atahualpa, or regional rulers such as the *Cazonci*, capable, it was thought, of organizing large widespread rebellions were quickly executed on trumped-up charges. Yet, it is obvious that many pre-conquest beliefs and practices continued to exist in a variety of forms during the colonial period, and even today. A history of this phenomenon faces several difficulties. The most obvious is that pre-conquest beliefs and especially practices, considered by Spanish authorities to be heresy or “superstition,” were hidden from official scrutiny. Sometimes the discovery of “idols” and surreptitious rites in caves or on mountain tops could be sensational, leading to inquiries and criminal trials, even to rebellions.⁴¹

Bishops on *visitas* or episcopal tours of their dioceses also discovered suspicious worship, some of which had clearly been ignored or accepted by the local Spanish priest or friar, dependent for his income on the local church fees for masses, births, marriages, and funerals, and fees from confraternities. Some curates were zealous, others less so. In heavily indigenous jurisdictions, often poorer such as Yucatán, Oaxaca, and Chiapas, priests were few, many isolated, and some charged with the spiritual care of many pueblos. Little wonder, then, that these friars failed to notice local practices or chose to ignore them.⁴²

A number of scholars have studied the role of confraternities in perpetuating forbidden religious practices in these latter areas. Confraternities sought to “broker” behaviours with the local priest in return for favours. Others followed public orthodoxy, while in local houses Indians worshiped clandestinely. What probably emerged in many places, as in Spain and elsewhere in Europe, was a local household religion with many variants in miracles and other beliefs, alongside a public orthodoxy.⁴³

41 One of the most spectacular of these events took place in the Zapotec region of Villa Alta, Oaxaca, in 1700. Two indigenous men informed local Spaniards about an unorthodox ceremony, probably an Indian calendrical rite, plus incantations and animal sacrifice in a private house. The two Indians were murdered by an enraged mob in this area, which had been subject to a vicious campaign against Zapotec religion. (The two Indian culprits were beatified by Pope John Paul II in 2001). David Tavárez, “Autonomy, Honor and the Ancestors: Native Local Religion in Seventeenth-Century Oaxaca,” in *Local Religion in Colonial Mexico*, (ed.) Martin Austin Nesvig (Albuquerque NM: 2006), 119–144.

42 Farriss, *Maya Society*, Chapter 11, finds that local priests had little influence over Yucatecan Indian confraternities. In Chiapas, there is evidence of evasion over lands that should have been reported to the authorities, and deliberate confusion over what constituted village communal lands and those belonging to “the saints” (*cofradías*). See María Dolores Palomo Infante, *Juntos y congregados: Historia de las cofradías en los pueblos de indios Tzotziles y Tzeltales de Chiapas, siglos XVI al XIX* (Mexico City: 2009), 161–166.

43 For Spain, see William A. Christian, Jr., *Local Religion in Sixteenth-Century Spain* (Princeton: 1981). Flavio Rojas Lima, *La cofradía reducto cultural indígena* (Guatemala City: 1988), finds the Indian *cofradía* there to be “ambiguous and contradictory” (p. 5, my translation)

Returning to Indian confraternity lands, two studies in the peripheral jurisdictions of Yucatán and Guatemala illustrate the divergent uses of these lands. In Yucatán, Indian pueblos invested in *estancias* or landed holdings which, by 1782, numbered 159. A study of one, founded in 1727 near Mérida, reveals a mostly standard formal structure including a constitution, entry fees, contributions for specific fiestas, and a funeral cooperative. The priest had assigned roles such as keeping an account book and offering masses on specific occasions and at funerals. Apart from these, and in spite of the bishop's attacks in 1737 on the confraternity's unseemly celebrations and its bullfights, comedies, and drunken feasts, the organisation in other matters went its own way. The labour force was small, including an administrator, a *mayoral* or work foreman, and a few *vaqueros* or cattlemen, as well as some seasonal debt peons. Cattle for market was the main product. Maize grown in the estancia fed the workforce, but more had to be purchased when crop yields were poor. The *mayoral* and *vaqueros* got yearly salaries and an allotment of maize, obviously more than enough usually, so that workers sometimes were able to sell a surplus. All the workers were in debt to the estancia. During the crisis of 1770–71, workers fled, abandoning their debts. Certainly this was a lower level commercial enterprise, fairly autonomous, but not yet a hacienda.⁴⁴

In highland Guatemala in the late 17th and early 18th centuries, the parts played by some Indian confraternities were very different. These marginal, usually small, holdings had many political and economic roles apart from the usual religious and festive functions. They were used for subsistence, rearing cattle, and growing maize. Some of them designed their holdings in ways of evading the exactions of church and state. Many also collected funds for processions and feasts. In an empty countryside, grazing cattle or rustling cattle from haciendas happened too often to be a rare phenomenon. And, as usual, a few parish priests used them to fund a fairly comfortable living. Thus these confraternities were a useful tool in village politics and against intrusive outsiders, just as frequently as they were agricultural or stock-raising

There is some relationship between confraternities that embraced all ethnicities and those that included women in their membership. In mostly Indian provinces, however, Indian *cofradías* in a few cases included indigenous

and explains the bafflement experienced by Bishop Pedro Cortés y Larraz who, on his episcopal visit, found that the rural clergy could not survive without confraternity fees, but that the *cofradías*, on the other hand, were centres of "the idolatries and vices of the Indians" (p. 12, my translation).

44 Robert Patch, "Una cofradía y su estancia en el siglo XVIII, notas de investigación," *Boletín de la Escuela de Ciencias Antropológicas de la Universidad de Yucatán* 8: 66–67 (1981): 56–66.

enfermeras (nurses) as members.⁴⁵ Another practice that gave women some influence and opportunities in confraternities was the endowing of capellanías in a confraternity, and perhaps more influence in a specific church, whereby a chosen cleric undertook to offer a stipulated number of masses for a designated person for departed souls in Purgatory, often for a late husband or relative, or for her own soul. All of this in return for a salary for the priest.

The availability of credit was a constant concern in rural societies. The church provided loans and censos to wealthier urban confraternities and private individuals, but seldom helped marginal people except with alms. Some were able to turn to reciprocal tasks in their communities, helping with house building, church repairs, and cleaning wells, foundations, and some aqueducts in return for food and clothing supplies. For those not on coasts with multi-cropping and fruits, the seasonal rounds of planting, weeding, and harvesting left dead seasons when trying to obtain new seeds for the first harvests was difficult. In several of these urban and rural areas the confraternities played a central part. In the poorer highland areas, they loaned mostly to their own members and often on a short-term basis. Some of the leading members of the elected governing bodies of *priostes* (officeholders) and *mayordomos* used confraternities as a sort of credit union. Some visiting priests and minor officials were dismayed to find treasuries empty, but on investigation discovered that the borrowers had promised to reimburse when the next harvest or cattle slaughter happened.⁴⁶

Other examples of confraternity credit and lending practices abound. In the Tacuba valley small loans went to their own *cofrades* and to owners of other small and medium landholdings, frequently short-term and in cash, to get by shortages and make minor repairs or agricultural improvements. In Michoacán a few of the large Spanish confraternities had become lenders of note, with loans as their main source of income. In Mexico City many of the Spanish confraternities participated heavily in the lending business. Perhaps the most detailed treatment of confraternities as credit institutions, some of them via forced loans and obligations, was in the province of Guerrero, especially in the

45 For multi-ethnic confraternities with women members, see Juan Javier Pescador, "Devoción y crisis demográfica: La cofradía de San Ignacio de Loyola, 1761–1821," *Historia Mexicana* 39:3 (1990): 767–801; and Teresa Eleazar Serrano Espinosa, "Establecimiento de una institución de asistencia espiritual y social en los conventos de carmelitas descalzas: La cofradía," in *Sobre religión y cultura en el México colonial*, (ed.) Teresa Eleazar Serrano Espinosa (Mexico City: 2009), 65–80.

46 Paloma Infante, *Juntos y congregados*, 110–122, for one of many examples of empty confraternity funds and treasuries.

region of Tlapa.⁴⁷ It is perhaps this vast array of credit institutions that shows the largest single departure from the imported Spanish and Mediterranean model.⁴⁸

6 Late Colonial Changes

One student of confraternities has discussed significant changes in attitudes and practices in 18th-century Mexico City. Brian Larkin describes a loosening of “larger collective identity,” the individual as “part of larger groups” including families and confraternities and, especially in the second half of the century, more of “an individual understanding of the self.” All this led to “a decline of communal piety” and more emphasis on the individual, so that communal routes to salvation such as the confraternity became less important.⁴⁹

These changes created a background in which a more aggressive state and its secular and ecclesiastical agents pushed reforms to strengthen the role of the state and collect more income for a financially stressed Spanish royal government. Confraternities, some very wealthy, were an obvious target, so much so that authorities began to attack what they regarded as wasteful expenditures on church decoration and communal feasting and drinking, among others. The Archbishop of Mexico, Alonso Núñez de Haro y Peralta, surveyed the numbers and funds of the 991 urban and rural confraternities under his jurisdiction and abolished 450 of them, mostly rural, mismanaged, and poor. In Mexico City, he amalgamated more than forty, often into ones dedicated to

47 Danièle Dehouve, *Quand les banquiers étaient des saints, 450 ans de l'histoire économique et sociale d'une province indienne du Mexique* (Paris: 1992), and her “El pueblo de indios y el mercado: Tlapa en el siglo XVIII,” in *Empresarios, indios y estado: perfil de la economía mexicana, siglo XVIII*, (eds.) Arij Ouweneel and Cristina Torales Pacheco (Amsterdam: 1988), 86–102. For a more general survey, consult her “El sistema de crédito al día en los pueblos indígenas durante el siglo XVIII,” in *Prestar y pedir prestado: relaciones sociales y crédito en México del siglo XVI al XX*, (eds.) Marie-Noëlle Chamoux, Danièle Dehouve, Cécile Gouy-Gilbert, and Marielle Pepin Lehalleur (Mexico City: 1996), 93–109.

48 One preliminary attempt to study the evolution and changes in the Spanish confraternity in the New World is Murdo J. MacLeod, “Desde el Mediterráneo y España hasta la Guatemala indígena: Las transformaciones de una institución colonial, la cofradía, 1550–1750,” in *Formaciones religiosas en la América colonial*, (eds.) María Alba Pastor and Alicia Mayer (Mexico City: 2000), 203–222.

49 “Confraternities and Community: The Decline of the Communal Quest for Salvation in Eighteenth-Century Mexico City,” in *Local Religion*, (ed.) Nesvig, 189–214.

the Blessed Sacrament.⁵⁰ Other New Spain bishops, perhaps less drastically, followed suit.

The Spanish state then followed. Imperial finances had been fairly stable for most of the 18th century, but broke down beginning in 1779, largely because of wars against England and France. In a series of decrees the crown proclaimed the *consolidación de vales reales* to apply to all the Spanish American colonies. These orders confiscated all church mortgages and obras pías, promising to pay interest on them at three per cent, a move that soon failed. These seizures began in Spain in 1778 and spread to New Spain and Peru from 1805 to 1812. Confraternity funds were included. Indian *cofradías* were exempted in law, but often suffered confiscations of various kinds, including their *cajas de comunidad*. New Spain was assigned 68 per cent of the total and Peru, where the viceroy was unwilling to the point of rebellion, 14 per cent (Guatemala paid more than Peru!).

Confraternities suffered disproportionately and many disappeared. Many debtors throughout New Spain went bankrupt, and by 1809 government payments on their loans had effectively ended. Credit dried up and the economic situation deteriorated. Massive disillusionment followed and served as a leading cause of revolts for independence.⁵¹ Weakened by these late colonial decrees, confraternities came under attack again during the Mexican reform period of the 1850s when the Ley Lerdo of 1856 confiscated many church-related properties.⁵² Confraternities exist to this day, some attached to cathedrals. They are few in number.

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50 Bazarte Martínez, *Las cofradías*, 129–136.

51 The leading source for the Consolidación is Gisela von Wobeser, *Dominación colonial: La consolidación de vales reales en Nueva España, 1804–1812* (Mexico City: 1999). Reinhard Liehr in his "Endeudamiento estatal y crédito privado: La consolidación de vales reales en Hispanoamérica," *Anuario de Estudios Americanistas* 41 (1984): 553–578, provides a survey of all the Spanish American domains. A curious book is Milagrosa Romero Samper, *Cofradías en el reformismo de Carlos IV* (Madrid: 1991), a thorough study of these matters in Spain that shows no interest in Spanish America.

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The Generative Space of Jewish Confraternities in Medieval and Early Modern Europe

Federica Francesconi

1 Introduction

Jewish voluntary associations in Western and Eastern Europe first appeared in the Middle Ages and then enjoyed impressive diffusion and remarkable success in the early modern period. They can be subdivided into four typologies in line with their main objectives: (1) caring for the sick and the dead; (2) devotional rituals and kabbalistic studies; (3) mutual and charitable aid; and (4) professional corporatism (guilds). The first European *hevrot* (Jewish confraternities or societies) emerged in 13th-century Aragon on the initiative of members of the lower classes and of some philanthropists who, in the absence of well-defined social welfare policies in the community, sought to do something to alleviate the lot of the destitute. The first documented confraternity of this kind was established in Saragossa in 1263–64 and was called *Kat ha-Havurah* (the collective faction).¹ In the 17th and 18th century in the ghetto in Rome there were thirty confraternities of twenty to twenty-five members each that looked after the care for the sick and dead, education and teaching, dowering brides, redeeming captives, and piety and devotion.²

This chapter will examine these four typologies of Jewish confraternities using the lenses of the recent historiographical shift that conceives fraternalism as a critical, but contradictory early modern European phenomenon that “was simultaneously transformative and reactionary, egalitarian and elitist, a vehicle of resistance and one of acculturation.”³ As we will see, in late-medieval and early modern Europe the line separating those typologies

1 Yom Tov Assis, *The Golden Age of Aragonese Jewry. Community and Society in the Crown of Aragon, 1213–1327* (London: 1997), 239, 244.

2 Attilio Milano, “Le confraternite pie del ghetto di Roma,” *La Rassegna mensile d’Israel* 24 (1958): 107–120.

3 Nicholas Terpstra, “De-Institutionalizing Confraternity Studies: Fraternalism and Social Capital in Cross-Cultural Contexts,” in *Early Modern Confraternities in Europe and the Americas: International and Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, (eds.) Christopher Black and Pamela Gravestock, (Aldershot: 2006), 264–283: 277.

was never clear—religious purposes, devotional activities, and charitable duties often overlapped as they evolved and fed into each other. This chapter will argue that European Jewish confraternities were characterised by an eclectic nature within the domestic and the public sphere where the intricacies between religious rituals, social norms, and transformative practices mingled and amalgamated. As a result, confraternities became one of the most generative spaces for Jewish communities throughout Europe. For example, in 17th-century Italy the *hevrot* (or *havurot*, *compagnie*, *fraterne*) were spaces that at times bridged Europe and the Mediterranean, where Mediterraneanizing themes such as the Lurianic kabbalah coexisted with Western-European elements such as Counter-Reformation influences.

In what follows we will examine Jewish confraternities with a specific eye on the care for the sick and dead and their social and cultural interplay between lower-class Jews and affluent leaders in the Crown of Aragon; the proliferation of both Jewish confraternities connected to assistance goals and to study and learning religious and kabbalistic literature in early modern Italy vis-à-vis Christian and Jewish Middle-Eastern cultural influences; the role of Jewish women, children, and youths in western European mutual societies and how those institutions provided the weakest members of the Jewish community opportunities to improve their daily lives and to elaborate strategies of social and cultural survival navigating amid control, solidarity, and philanthropy; and the foundations of both the *hevra kadisha* and the Jewish professional guild in central and eastern Europe as catalysts for social, devotional, and professional transformations. As will become evident, European Jewish confraternities probed issues of religious devotion, acculturation, social proximity, religious and lay leadership, ethnicity, class, and gender, and offered a unique opportunity to explore the complexities of late medieval and early modern Jewish identities.

2 Care for the Sick and Dead in Iberia and Beyond

The social values at the base of the first confraternities established in Iberia (Sefarad), Germany (Ashkenaz), and the Italian peninsula (I Tal Yah) were the study of the Torah, charity, and the performing of various types of *gemilut hesed* (acts of loving-kindness). According to Jewish ritual practice, the dead must be buried as soon as possible, within twenty-four hours of demise, in consideration of their corporeal integrity and the fact that they should not pollute the surrounding environment. The value of providing proper burial for the dead, referred to as *hesed shel emet* (an act of true loving-kindness) was

the first to assume a separate institutionalised form. Members of this type of association, eventually called the *Hevra Kadisha* (holy society) and *Gemilut Hasadim*, took care for the dead and sometimes also provided bedside care for the sick and dying. The terms *gemilut hesed* or *hasadim*, for the dispensing of benefits and charity, and *hesed shel emet*, for the activity of burials employed by members of these associations, are Talmudic in origin. Confraternities that took these tasks upon themselves are mentioned in the Talmud and the writings of medieval jurists (*rishonim*): the scholar Rashi (Solomon ben Isaac of Troyes, 1040–1105), for example, states that in ancient Palestine these societies were numerous and that each one concerned itself with the burial of its own members, but he does not offer specific information on their structure. Some scholars see the origins of medieval Jewish confraternities in ancient Palestine, where such an institution would have existed from the time of Bar Kochba (130s C.E.), while others are more persuaded by the influence of contemporary Christian models.⁴

What is clear, however, is that the confraternities for the care for the sick and dead that emerged in the medieval and early modern period were much more than continuations of past institutions—they responded to religious principles, individual needs, and social and political transformations within Jewish communities and beyond that were influenced by models present in surrounding societies. Jewish confraternities in 13th-century Aragon, for example, emerged in a precise historical context when members of the middle and lower classes felt the need of subverting the internal political balance of the *aljama* (the Jewish community) that was in the hands of affluent leaders who were insensitive to the needs of the poor. At the same time, Christian *cofradías* (confraternities) and *hermandades* (brotherhoods) with similar religious purposes and charitable duties were already present in large numbers in Aragon.⁵ According to Yom Tov Assis, however meagre the structural achievements of the lower classes might have been, they nonetheless succeeded in establishing *hevrot*, confraternities or societies, that were independent of the communal government and institutions. In the 14th and 15th centuries, a number of confraternities like the *Kat ha-Havurah* had their own synagogues where confraternity members not only felt at home, but also separated themselves from the establishment by, for example, participating in services without being subject

4 As summarized by Sylvie Anne Goldberg, *Crossing the Jabbok: Illness and Death in Ashkenazi Judaism in Sixteenth through Nineteenth-Century Prague* (Berkeley: 1996), 82–84.

5 On Christian confraternities, see Maureen Flynn, *Sacred Charity: Confraternities and Social Welfare in Spain, 1400–1700* (Ithaca: 1989) and James Brodman, *Charity and Welfare: Hospitals and the Poor in Medieval Catalonia* (Philadelphia: 1998).

to the limits and formalities of the main synagogues controlled by the affluent leaders of the community. Jewish confraternities also began expanding their tasks and merging different goals.⁶ In Saragossa, for example, the guild of Jewish silversmiths had their own synagogue, the *sinoga de los argenteros*. The phenomenon of Jewish trade guilds in Aragon was notable and reveals that confraternal sociability in those guilds went far beyond business. Around 1300, the local *hevra kadisha* known as the *Companya de los enterradores de la Merce* used the *sinoga menor* (the small synagogue) as their prayer centre. The Society for the Sick (*Bikur Holim* or *Bicurolim*) founded its own synagogue in 1382 and obtained a special permit to rebuild a house the society owned in the Jewish quarter and relocate the synagogue there.⁷

The economic downturn of the 14th century and the massacres of 1391 brought about the creation of other special confraternal organisations established by groups of Jews in both Aragon and Castile who united in their efforts to solve social problems in frameworks that were not under the control of the community. One of the aims of the *Rodfe Zedeq* or *Conpannya de la Merce*, one of the earliest to be formed in Saragossa, was to help the poor receive proper medical care and to arrange for their burial. In the 15th century the *Rodfe Zedeq* collected funds to build a hospice for the sick and poor that became an important institution in the life of the entire community until the 1492 expulsion.⁸ Care for the sick who could not afford doctors and medicines was partially assumed by *Bikur Holim* confraternities that began to appear in the first half of the 14th century; their members undertook to visit the sick poor and ensure they did not suffer from isolation, hunger, and lack of medical attention and medicines. *Bikur Holim* confraternities were present in Saragossa, Santa Coloma de Queralt, Perpignan, Huesca, and Teruel. Confraternities that specialised in arranging for constant supervision of the dangerously ill were active in the larger communities. Confraternities began expanding their sphere of activities to devotional and pietistic rituals by ensuring that prayers and psalms were recited at the bedsides of the sick. They also opened their own synagogues, which became a central institution in the *aljama*. In Aragon the *Bikur Holim* synagogue became the place where the grievances of the poor

6 On confraternities in Spain, see Yom Tov Assis, "Welfare and Mutual Aid in Spanish Jewish Communities," in *The Sephardi Legacy*, (ed.) Haim Bernart, vol. 1 (Jerusalem: 1992), 318–345; Asunción Blasco Martínez, "Instituciones sociorreligiosas judías de Zaragoza (siglos XIV–XV). Sinagogas, cofradías, hospitales," *Sefarad* 49 (1989): 227–236; 50 (1990): 3–46.

7 Assis, *The Golden Age of Aragonese Jewry*, 246–247.

8 Blasco Martínez, "Instituciones sociorreligiosas," 45; Assis, *The Golden Age of Aragonese Jewry*, 248–249.

were voiced and the lower classes conducted their struggle against the leaders of the community.⁹

The forced conversions of 1391 left a number of conversos suddenly deprived of the social structures that had provided welfare for them as members of the *aljama*. In 1404 in Majorca the conversos, rather than join existing Christian confraternities, formally established a confraternity of their own named the *Confraria Novella de Sant Miquel* that sought to raise funds for “good works” and, specifically, for care for the sick and burial of the dead. As Natalie Oeltjen has pointed out, this confraternity mirrors the construction of the hybrid identities of the new ethnic group of the first and the second generation of conversos in Majorca.¹⁰ The *Confraria Novella de Sant Miquel* lacked the devotional component that was typical of Old Christian confraternities and focused instead, as did Jewish confraternities, on distributing charity with specific aims, such as raising money for ransoming captives and providing dowries for poor girls.

The dramatic decline in economic, social, and cultural Jewish life in Iberia in the 14th and the 15th centuries, aggravated by intensifying Christian polemics in matters of faith and practice, fostered new forms of piety and dedication that ultimately shaped new forms of fraternalism that, in following centuries, Spaniard Jewish exiles both transplanted and transformed in the Mediterranean, specifically in the Italian peninsula and in the land of Israel. New confraternities were formed in and around synagogues for the purpose of meticulous observance of religious precepts and the performance of devotional prayers and communal rituals in line with a widespread spirit of repentance that ultimately raised Jewish messianic expectations.¹¹ Many of these confraternities left no records except for financial and organisational transactions. Such was the society *Ashmoret ha-Boker* (*confradria de la Maytinal*, or *d’Azmuro*) that was established in Saragossa in 1378. Their members rose before dawn and prayed at sunrise, distributed alms, and performed good deeds among their fellow Jews: in *Ashmoret ha-Boker* religious and charitable purposes coexisted

9 Starting in the 14th century, the *Shomrei Holim* (Guardians of the Sick) was another confraternity that took care of the sick and was present in Santa Coloma de Queralt, Saragossa, and Murviedro. See Assis, *The Golden Age of Aragonese Jewry*, 247.

10 Natalie Oeltjen, “A Converso Confraternity in Majorca: La Novella Confraria de Sant Miquel,” *Jewish History*, 24.1 (2010): 53–85.

11 Yitzhak Baer, “The Messianic Movement in Spain in the Period of the Exile,” (Hebrew) *Zion* 5 (1930): 61–77, reprinted in *Measef Zion* (Jerusalem: 1978) 2:61–77; Haim Beinart, “Conversos of Chillón and the Prophecies of Mari Gómez and Inés, the Daughter of Juan Esteban,” (Hebrew) *Zion* 48 (1983): 241–272; Renée Levine Melammed, *Heretics or Daughters of Israel? The Crypto-Jewish Women of Castile* (New York: 1999), 45–72.

since the beginning of its foundation.¹² This type of confraternity challenged both sociability and piety within the Italian Jewish ghettos.

3 From Care for the Sick and Dead to Kabbalistic Devotions in the Italian Peninsula

After 1391 and then after the 1492 expulsion, Spanish exiles played a crucial role in the proliferation of hevrot in other European contexts. In the nearby French context, for example, the Jewish community of Arles in 1401 created the society of *Malbishei Arumim* (those who clothe the naked). Its vocation consisted not only in dispensing money to the poor on a weekly basis, whether or not they were part of the society, but also visiting the sick, escorting funeral processions, and consoling mourners.¹³ In the Italian peninsula a great variety of Jewish confraternal groups emerged, at times based on national origin. Upon moving to Italy Spaniard Jews initially formed Catalan or Castilian groups in the larger Jewish hubs such as Ferrara, Rome, and Bologna.¹⁴ In Rome, for example, two Jewish confraternities devoted to Torah study (*Talmud Torah*) that emerged as early as 1539 were associated with the Aragonese and the Castilian communities.¹⁵

In his pioneering studies on the history of Italian hevrot, Elliott Horowitz has identified two main varieties: one was organised by the most influential members of the community and was substantially connected to assistance goals while another spread in northern Italy during the 17th century and was more focused on study and learning religious and kabbalistic texts with a base of participants that went beyond the elites. The typical confraternity of the first variety was known as *Gemilut Hasadim*, which reflected its benevolent orientation; the first Italian *Gemilut Hasadim* societies were established in Ferrara in 1516, in Modena in 1517, and in Verona at least since 1545.¹⁶ Eventually,

12 Assis, *The Golden Age of Aragonese Jewry*, 325.

13 Maurice Kriegel, *Les juifs à la fin du moyen âge* (Paris, 1979), 267.

14 Robert Bonfil, *Jewish Life in Renaissance Italy* (Berkeley: 1994), 171–172, 195–197.

15 Milano, “Le confraternite pie del ghetto,” 107–120; Elliott Horowitz, “Processions, Piety, and Jewish Confraternities,” in *The Jews of Early Modern Venice*, (eds.) Robert C. Davis and Benjamin Ravid (Baltimore: 2001), 231–248, 231.

16 David Ruderman, “The Founding of a ‘Gemilut Hasadim’ Society in Ferrara in 1515,” *AJS (Association for Jewish Studies) Review* 1 (1976): 233–268; Elliott Horowitz, “Jewish Confraternal Piety in the Veneto in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries,” in *Gli ebrei a Venezia*, (ed.) Gaetano Cozzi (Milan: 1987), 301–313, 303–304; Horowitz, “Jewish Confraternal Piety in Sixteenth-Century Ferrara: Continuity and Change,” in *The Politics of Ritual*

the trend toward specialisation led to the foundation of confraternities with specific aims of an essentially benevolent character such as ransoming captives or dowering young women. The second variety was connected to a new form of Jewish piety that, starting in the 1570s, first appeared in Venice and then spread to some of the neighbouring communities in the region. Societies calling themselves by such names as *Shomrim la-Boker* (watchers for the morning) and *Me'irè Shachar* (those who awake the dawn) were founded for the purpose of performing and promoting a predawn rite of voluntary prayer (*ashmoret ha-boker*) that incorporated elements from the homonymous Spanish societies and others from Safed. As originally practiced in Venice, this was a penitential ritual, mourning over the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem, lamenting the sufferance of the exile, imploring forgiveness for sins, and ultimately invoking messianic salvation and redemption.¹⁷

The proliferation of Jewish confraternities in the 1570s, paralleled by the same phenomenon in Venetian Christian society, was also undoubtedly spurred by the plague that decimated the region in 1575 and led to a demographic drop of 30 percent of the population in Venice.¹⁸ The 1581 statutes of the Venetian *Gemilut Hasadim* pay a lot of attention to the plague: they say that, if any member became seriously ill and requested the assistance of the confraternity, four other members were to be chosen by lot to attend him, and that upon the death of any Venetian Jew the confraternity was to send four of its members, chosen by lot, to perform the burial. Like other hevrot in the ghetto, the *Gemilut Hasadim* was immersed in the culture of the time in which processional rituals shaped the identity of cities, societies, and individuals. Mirroring the customs of Christian confraternities, members of the *Gemilut Hasadim* as well as those of the Levantine *Hasi Betulot* (dowering maidens) and the Ashkenazic *Rodefè Mitzvot* (Pursuers of the Commandments) accompanied the deceased to burial at the Jewish cemetery on the Lido with boats and torches paid by the confraternities.¹⁹

Between the end of the 16th century and the late 1620s the predawn rite of *Shomrim la-Boker* was flourishing in Italy. By the 17th century, societies for the recitation of these prayers existed in all major Italian communities, with

Kinship: Confraternities and Social Order in Early Modern Italy, (ed.) Nicholas Terpstra (Cambridge: 2000), 150–171.

17 Moshe Idel, *Messianic Mystics* (New Haven: 1998), 126–182 and bibliography therein.

18 On the plague in Venice, see Paolo Preto, *Peste e società a Venezia, 1576* (Vicenza: 1978). On Venetian confraternities see David D'Andrea, "Charity and Confraternities," in *A Companion to Venetian History, 1400–1797*, (ed.) Eric Dursteler (Leiden: 2013), 421–447 and the bibliography therein.

19 Horowitz, "Processions, Piety, and Jewish Confraternities," 238 and 241.

some, like Mantua and Modena, hosting two, and Venice, where it all began, as many as three. In the first three decades of that century, the celebrated Modenese scholar and kabbalist R. Aaron Berekhiah Modena (1578–1639), working in collaboration with his teacher, the known kabbalist Menahem Azariah da Fano (1548–1620) in Reggio Emilia, established an influential Lurianic Kabbalah, mainly in the version of Rabbi Israel Sarug (fl. 1590–1610), among the Italian Jewish communities.²⁰

The kabbalists of Safed and other centres in the land of Israel influenced Italian Jewish communities through distinctive theological conceptions and a religious way of life that they elaborated between approximately 1530 and 1590. Lawrence Fine has identified five main features of Safed piety: messianic fervour, organised brotherhoods, ascetic behaviour, ritual innovation, and contemplative exercises.²¹ Alongside conventional synagogue congregations, a number of hevrot or international brotherhoods developed in Safed and served, to a certain degree, to institutionalise kabbalistic devotion. While membership in a congregation was usually based on the arbitrary factor of one's family background, devout fellowships brought together individuals interested in a greater degree of specialisation when it came to the life of piety. These fellowships, often under the spiritual guidance of particular and influential personalities, such as Moses Cordovero (1522–70), Eleazar Azikri (1533–1600), Isaac Luria (1534–72), and Hayyim Vital (1543–1620) constituted a vehicle by which the idea of collective obligation could find expression and support; they could also serve as peer pressure to live the correct life of mystical piety. According to Hayyim Vital: "When it comes to the love for one's associates who study the Torah with one another, each and every person must bind himself to the others as if he were one limb within the body of this fellowship."²² Some of the other groups appear to have been devoted to highly specialised goals. For example, there is evidence of groups who pursued atonement through especially severe ascetic practices, others who were aimed at rejoicing at the conclusion of every Sabbath, others at celebrating the night of *Simhat Torah* (the joy of the Torah) with singing and dancing in the presence of the Torah scroll in every synagogue.²³

20 Moshe Idel, "Major Currents in Italian Kabbalah in the Early Seventeenth Century," in *Jewish Thought in the Seventeenth Century*, (eds.) Isadore Twersky and Bernard Septimus (Cambridge, MA: 1987), 137–200.

21 Lawrence Fine, trans. *Safed Spirituality: Rules of Mystical Piety, the Beginning of Wisdom* (New York: 1984), 4.

22 Hayyim Vital, *Shaar ba-Kavvanot of the Shemonah Shearin*, 2a–2b (s.d.), quoted in Fine, trans. *Safed Spirituality*, 11.

23 Fine, trans. *Safed Spirituality*, 11.

The case of the city of Modena is representative of the evolution of fraternalism and hevrot in multiple forms and how Safed piety functioned as a catalyst of socio-cultural transformations. In 1561, a few decades after the establishment of the *Gemilut Hasadim*, the *Talmud Torah* was created for the education to the young.²⁴ In 1614 Aaron Berekhiah Modena established in his house the *Hevrat Machshivim* for the study of kabbalistic texts.²⁵ This confraternity was strongly connected to the devotional group *Me'irè Shachar*, which he had founded in 1617 and had always conducted in his house. Aaron Berekhiah's house became a crossroads of primary importance for the diffusion of Lurianic Kabbalah in Europe and the Mediterranean. At first, groups such as *Me'irè Shachar* and *Shomrim la-Boker*—the latter became the more predominant denomination—used to gather daily one hour before dawn to recite prayers, psalms, and *selihot* (penitential hymns), but shortly after they began to observe the vigils for Shabbat and other Jewish holidays.²⁶ From the middle of the 17th century, side by side with *Ashmoret ha-Boker*, the nocturnal rite of *Tikkun Hazot* (midnight vigils) becomes an increasingly visible presence upon the scene of Italian Jewish confraternities often associated with the consumption of coffee.²⁷

From the end of the 16th century to the first half of the 18th century, *Shomrim la-Boker* societies in Italy also compiled and published prayer books that had an ample circulation beyond Italy. They were particularly active in Modena.²⁸ Aaron Berekhiah composed a book of liturgical poems, *Ashmoret ha-boker* (Mantua, 1624), for his group. In 1623, a new group, *Shomrim la-Boker*, was established under the tutelage of Yosef Carmi (c.1590–?) at the Usiglio oratory in the homonymous house and aimed at the same purposes as *Me'irè Shachar*: devotional prayers and sessions of study inspired by devotional kabbalah from Safed. The two groups entered into conflict more because of matters of competition between their two respective leaders than disagreements and divergence in foundational tenets and devotional rituals. For example, both confraternities celebrated the new moon (*Rosh Hodesh*) as a minor day of atonement

24 Archival evidence is preserved in Archivio della Comunità ebraica di Modena, Archivio aggregato Talmud Torà, Carteggio (sec. XVIII–1857), busta n. 1.

25 Isaiah Tishby, "The Confrontation between Lurianic and Cordoverian Kabbalah in the Writings and Life of R. Aharon Berechiah of Modena" (Hebrew), *Zion* 39 (1974): 8–85, esp. 35–36.

26 Elliott Horowitz, "Jewish Confraternities in Seventeenth-Century Verona: A Study in the Social History of Piety." PhD dissertation (Yale University: 1987), 137–203.

27 Horowitz, "Jewish Confraternal in the Veneto," 304–309 and Elliott Horowitz "Coffee, Coffeehouses, and the Nocturnal Rituals of Early Modern Jewry," *AJS Review* 14.1 (1989): 17–46.

28 Michela Andreatta, "The Printing of Devotion in Seventeenth-Century Italy: Prayer Books Printed for the Shomrim la-Boker Confraternities," in *The Hebrew Book in Early Modern Italy*, (eds.) Joseph Hacker and Adam Shear (Philadelphia: 2011), 156–170.

that initially was practiced among medieval Ashkenazic Jews, then revived and given new significance by the kabbalists in Safed in the 1570s, and then, by the turn of the century, came to be observed in Italy thanks to Menahem Azariah of Fano and Aaron Berekhiah. In the 1610s–20s Aaron Berekhiah played a crucial role in shaping a new form of *viddui* (confession) to be performed in a public and more solemn setting—that of the *hevrah*—as a ritual at the death-bed that contained kabbalistic pietistic elements and revealed acculturation of Christian Catholic religiosity that implied not a mere imitation, but rather an attempt at being and appearing superior. As he writes in the introduction of his *Maavar Yabbok* (Mantua: 1626), a famous treatise that inaugurated the genre of books for the sick and the dying in the early modern era: “Why should we be inferior, we the nation of the God of Abraham, and not search the compartments of our Torah to discover there for ourselves something appropriate to accompany the sacrifice of our souls.”²⁹ Berekhiah’s *Maavar Yabbok* was crucial in challenging Jewish confraternities and their funerary rituals in central Europe.

Elliott Horowitz has argued that new forms of Jewish piety, such as the adoption of the Lurianic Kabbalah, and Counter-Reformation influences—a restriction of popular manifestations and expressions, considered dangerous and subversive—led to a change within Italian Jewish society. Under the influence of the same Aaron Berekhiah Modena, attempts were made in Modena to transform the vigil in the night before the circumcision of a new-born that had emerged in the late Middle Ages as a night of largely profane festivity in which women also played a prominent, in some cases dominant role. Aaron Berekhiah tried to transform it into a more-sober and sacred event with the study of the mystical treatise *Zohar* and the exclusion of popular and festive elements such as the presence of women.³⁰ He eventually imagined and designed the reality of women’s lives confined within the domestic domain and, while doing so, articulated the female Jewish space with sophistication by providing them with new prayers and rituals.³¹ Yet, at the time Jewish women’s participation in local confraternities declined and their role in Jewish society became barely visible compared to the past.

29 Horowitz, “Jewish Confraternities in Seventeenth-Century Verona,” 66. On death rituals among Christian confraternities in early modern Italy see Cristopher Black, *Italian Confraternities in the Sixteenth Century* (Cambridge: 1989), 184–200, 231–233.

30 See Horowitz, “The Eve of Circumcision,” esp. 51–53.

31 On this, see my forthcoming monograph, *Invisible Enlighteners: Modenese Jewry from Renaissance to Emancipation*.

4 Navigating amid Fraternalism, Charity, and Control: Women, Children, and Youths

The attempt to exclude women from festive events like pre-circumcision vigils show that within Italian Jewish communities the presence of women, but also of youths, in the public sphere was at times challenged by cultural transformations and negotiated with the lay and rabbinic male establishments. For example, the *Gemilut Hasadim* in Ferrara, at the beginning in 1515 and until to 1553 was democratic regarding membership: no discrimination for enrolment was made on the basis of census, prestige, and sex.³² By 1553, however, the situation had changed: only members with good social status were accepted and the number of women decreased from 14 to 8; by 1582 only men figured among the members.

The history of Jewish confraternities in early modern Italy is often characterised by an inward phase that begins a few decades after their foundation.³³ The confraternity *Hevrat Nizharim* (heedful, observant), established in Bologna in 1546, had religious and philanthropic purposes that included the observation of three major precepts: learning the Torah, praying together, and participating in charity work. Its statutes show that at the time of its foundation women were admitted as members and children under 13 years of age were permitted to participate in confraternity activities.³⁴ Jewish women were probably also accepted into Modenese *Gemilut Hasadim*. Some Italian rabbis, however, such as Aaron Berekhiah Modena, disapproved of women's participation in the Jewish public sphere; this included the conduct of parallel religious services in the women's sections in synagogues as well as women's presence with men at cemeteries. As a result, in the 17th century Italian Jewish confraternities like *Gemilut Hasadim* appear as almost exclusively male spaces. Italian Jewish societies, recently ghettoised, were in transformation. They often exercised control and surveillance over women and children, whose potentially transgressive behaviours induced the male establishment to follow a strategy of conservatism, surveillance, solidarity, and cohesion through which, at least in Northern Italy, the mercantile and male-centred elites were able to gain control over the community.³⁵

The only Jewish confraternity that in 17th-century Italy admitted the co-participation of men and women was the *Hebrà para Cazar Orfas e Donzelas*

32 Ruderman, "The Founding of a 'Gemilut Hasadim' Society"; Horowitz, "Jewish Confraternal Piety."

33 Horowitz, "Jewish Confraternal Piety in Ferrara," 158–162.

34 *Vita religiosa ebraica a Bologna nel Cinquecento. Gli Statuti della Confraternita dei solerti*, (eds.) Mauro Perani and Bracha Rivlin (Florence: 2000), esp. 121–124.

35 On this see Francesconi, *Invisible Enlighteners*.

(in Hebrew, *Mohar ha-Betulot*) in Livorno. Founded in 1644, it collected funds for providing dowries for Jewish maidens.³⁶ There is evidence of the existence of two sisterhoods (recorded as *Compagnia delle donne*) in Venice in the 1640s and in Florence at least since 1669, both of which were presumably devoted to dowering brides.³⁷ As I showed elsewhere, Jewish women in early modern Italy through a process of feminisation invested in the house were able to negotiate cultural survival and to shape new forms of devotion both domestic and public, among which female Jewish confraternities located in the houses of Jewish matrons.³⁸ In November 1735 a group of twenty-two well-to-do Jewish women in Modena—apparently passive in the ghetto society and their family business—were inspired by the famous verse “you shall love your neighbour as yourself” to establish the sisterhood *Soed Holim* (to Benefit the Sick) whose aim was to “help and assist all sick women, rich and poor, in the ghetto.” Indeed they took a firm stand and their activities were remarkably wide ranging.

Marriage was the prerequisite for being considered a responsible adult and for obtaining acceptance in the sisterhood, as it was in Italian Jewish male confraternities. Modenese Jewish women organised their *hevrah*, or confraternity, with a specifically female self-consciousness. The confraternity employed women over ten years old as assistants, servants, administrators, and representatives, and involved them in their weekly and monthly meetings. In Jewish societies in Italy and elsewhere ten years of age was considered a decisive break between childhood and adulthood.³⁹ The participation of each of these female members varied over the years, but evidence shows that during the second half of the 18th century fifteen members of the board along with ten servants were always more active than others in the confraternity. Fifteen years later, on the first day of the Hebrew month of *Tevet* 5511 (29 December 1750), an unusual procession of men and women advanced through the two streets of Modena's ghetto and arrived at Miriam Rovigo's home. The members of *Soed Holim* were making their first “public” donations of community charity: a dowry to a poor

36 Renzo Toaff, *La nazione ebrea a Livorno e a Pisa (1591–1700)* (Florence: 1990), 263–268; Moisés Orfali, “The Portuguese Dowry Society in Livorno and the Marrano Diaspora,” *Studia Rosenthaliana* 35.2 (2001): 143–156.

37 Unfortunately, the documentation preserved mentions only these two institutions. See Stefanie Siegmund, *The Medici State and the Ghetto of Florence: The Construction of an Early Modern Jewish Community* (Stanford: 2005), 404; Carla Boccato, “Aspetti della condizione femminile nel ghetto di Venezia (secolo XVIII): i Testamenti,” *Italia* 10 (1993): 105–135, 120.

38 Francesconi, *Invisible Enlighteners*.

39 Elliott Horowitz, “The Worlds of Jewish Youth in Europe, 1300–1800,” in *A History of Young People in the West, Volume 1: Ancient and Medieval Rites of Passage*, (eds.) Giovanni Levi and Jean-Claude Schmitt, 83–119 (Cambridge, MA: 1997), 92–100.

Jewish girl and wood for the fireplaces of all the poor families in the ghetto. The confraternity wanted to honour the minor holiday of the new moon and demonstrate the sanctity of their confraternity through an explicit reference to the month in which its activities began (the exact date was 22 December, or the sixth of *Tevet*).⁴⁰ *Rosh Hodesh* of *Tevet* was of special significance to women because on that day they avoided heavy work.⁴¹ A public celebration in which women were the primary actors complemented the male-dominated society of an Italian ghetto, and did so from within.⁴²

Italian Jewish confraternities specifically for youths never included girls and young women. They were established to serve as an intermediate stage in the socialisation process between education and marriage and to provide a social and spiritual base for young men during the difficult years of the adolescence. In the 16th century a *havurat bahurim* (young men) was active in Verona; another was active in Asti in 1619, the *Havurat Zerizim* (youths), also known as *Havurat Ha-Bahurim*. The latter admitted youths between 13 and 18, that is between the age for compulsory education and the age more suitable for marriage. Despite the fact that these confraternities were established with the precise intent of curbing the wonderings of male youths in the streets, ritualised acts of festive unruliness, such as the charivaris that were the norm in the surrounding Christian society, characterised the young Jewish men's confraternal activities, as well as more sober events such as the annual banquet to be held on the recurrence of *Lag ba-Omer* (a minor holiday that occurs on the 33rd day of the Omer, the 49-day period between Passover and Shavuot) by the *Hevrat Zerizim*, in perfect consonance with their character as a society for young men, which also had its counterparts in Christian confraternities of the time.⁴³

If Jewish girls did not gather in confraternities, in a sense Jewish confraternities across all Europe gathered for them and their dowries. According to the Talmud, bride money is one of the five obligations of a father to his son (the other are circumcision, teaching the Torah and a profession, marriage, and

40 Archivio della Comunità ebraica di Modena, Soed Holim, 8 November 1750; 23 August 1751.

41 On the importance of *Rosh Hodesh* for Jewish women see Chava Weissler, *Voices of the Matriarchs: Listening to the Prayers of Early Modern Jewish Women* (Boston: 1998), 23, 112–116. For a specific reference to Italian Jewish context see Leone da Modena, *Historia de' riti ebraici* (Venice: 1638), 63.

42 See Federica Francesconi, "Confraternal Community as a Vehicle for Jewish Female Agency in Eighteenth-Century Italy," in *Faith's Boundaries: Laity and Clergy in Early Modern Confraternities*, (eds.) Nicholas Terpstra with Adriano Prosperi and Stefania Pastore (Turnout: 2013), 251–276 and Francesconi, *Invisible Enlighteners*.

43 Horowitz, "The Worlds of Jewish Youth," 92–100. For a Christian youth confraternity, see Konrad Eisenbichler, *The Boys of the Archangel Raphael: A Youth Confraternity in Renaissance Florence 1411–1785* (Toronto: 1998).

swimming). In addition, the Talmud rules that it is permissible to stop studying Torah and even to sell a Torah scroll in order to provide financial aid to a female orphan who wishes to marry. The legal code *Shulkan Arukh*, composed by Rabbi Joseph Caro (1488–1575) in Israel in 1563 and published in Venice in 1565, argues that money from foundations that is intended for other purposes may be used for bride money.⁴⁴ In early modern Europe, Jewish mutual aid societies for dowries proliferated; often there was more than one confraternity exclusively devoted to this task in every town and city where a Jewish community with more than one ethnic group existed. In 17th-century Venice, for example, the Italo-Ashkenazic *Hasi Betulot*, the Ponentine *Cazar Orphaos* (a congregation primarily of ex-converts and their descendants), and the Levantine *Hasi Betulot* were founded.⁴⁵ Unlike many other confraternities that were part of 17th-century Catholic and Italian-Jewish life, the *Cazar Orphaos*, established in 1613, did not confine itself to the local community; the scope of its activities was meant to be unlimited by political or geographical boundaries so that a woman could apply for a dowry whether “born here in Venice, or outside.” Similarly, membership was open to persons in Venice “or outside.” Yet, as Miriam Bodian has remarked, these provisions remained dead letter. The Venetian society explicitly excluded non-Sephardic Jews and required applicants to be “poor Hebrew girls, Portuguese or Castilian on the father’s or mother’s side.” Bodian’s work also demonstrates that the philanthropic activity of the Ponentine *Cazar Orphaos* was geographically quite far-ranging; aside from Venetian girls, considerable numbers of candidates came from Salonica, Pisa, Monastir, Livorno, Corfu, Ferrara, Skopje, Constantinople, and Tunis.⁴⁶

In 1615 a group of fifteen Amsterdam “Portuguese” merchants, among them some of the most prominent figures in the community, established the *Santa Companhia de Dotar Orfans e Donzeles Pobras*, referred to commonly as the *Dotar*. The confraternity was explicitly modelled on the Venetian *Cazar Orphaos* and its function was to dispense dowries to poor girls. However, according to Bodian, the *Dotar* also served to proclaim the distinctiveness, unity, and solidarity of the Portuguese Nation irrespective of religious or political boundaries by being: “A society of Portuguese, established with divine favour, to marry poor orphans and poor maidens of this Portuguese Nation, and the Castilian, among residents [in the region stretching] from Saint-Jean-de-Luz to Danzig,

44 Orfali, “The Portuguese Dowry Society,” 144–145.

45 Horowitz, “Processions, Piety, and Jewish Confraternities,” 242–245.

46 Miriam Bodian, “The ‘Portuguese’ Dowry Societies in Venice and Amsterdam: A Case Study in Communal Differentiation within the Marrano Diaspora,” *Italia* 6 (1987): 30–61; Bodian, *Hebrews of the Portuguese Nation. Conversos and Community in Early Modern Amsterdam* (Bloomington: 1997), 135.

including France and the Netherlands, England and Germany; [a society] to which may be admitted all those who agree to aid in this pious work who belong to our Hebrew Nation, Portuguese or Castilian, or their descendants by the masculine or feminine line, residents in every part of the world.”⁴⁷ Thus Amsterdam’s “Portuguese” pursued an institutionalised means to reach out not just to Sephardic Jews, but to the entire scattered “Portuguese Nation,” conversos and former conversos alike. They adopted and eventually radicalised both of the Venetian innovations: the principles of diaspora-wide activity, on the one hand, and the adoption of the criterion of Sephardic lineage, on the other. The *Dotar* founders extended the society’s Sephardic orbit to include New Christians living in Catholic lands and, at the same time, entirely excluded non-Sephardim from the ranks of its members and applicants.⁴⁸ The *Dotar* statutes excluded New Christians who were inclined to Catholicism, but welcomed as members those who, though outwardly Catholic in practice, were sympathetic to Judaism even if they were not circumcised. Like its counterpart in Livorno, the *Santa Companhia* admitted women as members; the first female member joined in 1641.⁴⁹ Perhaps the most remarkable fact of the *Dotar* was its affirmation of a “Portuguese” identity for both men and women that at the same time was never disjointed from its Jewish component.⁵⁰

5 The *Hevra Kadisha* in the German-Ashkenazic Context

Jacob Marcus has investigated the history of the *hevra kadisha* in the German-Ashkenazic context emphasizing the influence of the model of the Germanic guilds in their establishment. Without denying the obvious influence of the exiles from Spain and Portugal, he sees the Ashkenazic-German *hevra kadisha* as based on a system of corporate hierarchy with its characteristic convivial aspects, such as the annual community banquet, as derived and copied from the guild model.⁵¹ Considering that the first *hevra kadisha* we know about in

47 Bodian, *Hebrews of the Portuguese Nation*, 134.

48 Bodian, *Hebrews of the Portuguese Nation*, 135–136.

49 Jessica V. Roitman, “Marriage, migration, and money: The Santa Companhia de dotar orphãs e donzelas pobres in the Portuguese Sephardic Diaspora,” *Portuguese Studies Review* 13:1 (2005): 347–367, 348.

50 Bodian, *Hebrews of the Portuguese Nation*, 137. On another Portuguese Jewish community and its proliferation of confraternities in the 18th century, see Gérard Nahon, “La Jébéra et Les Confréries de la Nation Juive Portugaise de Bayonne au XVIII^e Siècle,” in *From Catalonia to the Caribbean: The Sephardic Orbit from Medieval to Modern Times: Essays in Honor of Jane. S. Gerber*, (eds.) Federica Francesconi, Stanley Mirvis, and Brian Smollet (Leiden: 2018), 154–183, and bibliography therein.

51 Jacob R. Marcus, *Communal Sick-Care in the German Ghetto* (Cincinnati: 1947), 55–109.

the Ashkenazic context was established in Frankfurt only in 1517, we should assume that it was a product of cultural transformations, ways of life, and religious and social practices under way throughout the Ashkenazic communities where both the influence of the surrounding Christian societies and Sephardic and Palestinian cultural and devotional elements played an important but not unique role. One of its members, Rabbi Joseph Yuspa Hahn (1570–1637), comments that it was created because “there were many dead, groaning like abandoned corpses, who had no one to bury them” and “those who performed this task did not know the required ritual procedure.” According to Hahn the role of the *hevra kadisha* was twofold: to make sure that all members of the community could be buried with decency and according to prescribed practice and to oversee the education of members of the burial society in matters of funeral ritual.⁵²

In central and eastern Europe fraternalism was also characterised by the creation of Jewish professional guilds. Beginning in the 17th century, especially in Moravia, Bohemia, and Poland-Lithuania, Jews organised guilds in an attempt to improve their economic status, particularly by maintaining appropriate standards and controlling competition in a much similar manner as Jews in Aragon had done in the medieval period. In Krakow, for example, the Jewish master-barbers founded their own guild in 1639. As in other towns, they undertook professional duties that positioned them between Jewish physicians and nurses. Membership in these guilds was not voluntary: all the practitioners in a craft were required to belong. The creation of specific guilds was connected with the care for the sick and the social goals of the *hevra kadisha*.⁵³

Perhaps the most important Jewish philanthropic confraternity was founded in Prague in 1564. According to its statutes, the confraternity was committed to addressing the needs of the poor by overseeing the distribution of wood and alms. In addition, three permanent funds were established for paying exceptional taxes, for example in case of a decree of expulsion; for ensuring the upkeep of the Prague cemetery or, this failing, that of other communities; and for providing extraordinary social needs in case of wars or epidemics. Jews in Prague followed Aaron Berekhiah Modena's revolutionary funerary rituals and so were conducting burial processions, transforming them into highly symbolic ceremonies with allusions to the ritual of purification through the flames

52 Goldberg, *Crossing the Jabbok*, 84.

53 The statutes are published in Marc Saperstein and Jacob Raeder, *The Jews in Christian Europe: A Source Book, 315–1791* (Cincinnati and Pittsburgh: 2015), 342–347; on Jewish guilds see Jacob Katz, *Tradition and Crisis. Jewish Society at the End of the Middle Ages*, translated and with an afterword and bibliography by Bernard Dov Cooperman (New York: 1993), 135–140.

of the biblical river Yabbok.⁵⁴ For example, the Jewish ritual included the custom of the seven *hakḳafot*, seven circuits around the dead while reciting seven stanzas from a liturgical *piyyut* (poem) composed by Aaron Berekhiah himself. According to Kabbalistic interpretations, the function of the *hakḳafot* was to distance impurity from the soul. Aaron Berekhiah was convinced that this was a crucial passage in order to return the soul to God because the relationship between man and Lilith began in the same moment in which the malign spirit had conceived him or her.⁵⁵

The confraternity grew in importance because at the end of the 17th century the city hosted the largest Jewish community (over 10,000) in Europe. It also assumed the major obligation for providing the entire community with appropriate burial rites. Members of the society received special treatment: they were buried in a preferred location and special attention and honour were accorded to their funeral arrangements. In 1692 women had become part of the burial society and a Holy Society of Benevolent Women cared for the ritual burial of women. Women as members of a bereaving family or as active figures in the burial society are also present in a remarkable cycle of fifteen burial society paintings from Prague, datable to the 1780s and preserved in the Jewish Museum in Prague; they illustrate various functions associated with the burial society and show women as the wives of a sick or dying husband in the domestic sphere and as active members of the *hevra* as they prepare shrouds for the deceased.⁵⁶

As an institution, the *hevra kadisha* was particularly prestigious. Reflecting their pride of association, members commissioned special objects attached to their unique function, as was the case among guilds and religious confraternities in Christian Europe. These various objects reinforced the ties among members of the society and at the same time alluded to the profound religious meaning of their actions. For example, in 1691 Moses, the son of Jacob Polin, dedicated a large enamelled glass beaker to his fellow morticians of the Burial Society of Polin in Bohemia. At their annual banquet, members of the society were to drink from the beaker. The glass shows members of the society in a procession—four well-dressed pallbearers carry the bier on their shoulders, another three carry shovels and then four mourners follow, also well dressed, with their left hands raised.⁵⁷ In the 18th and the 19th century the *hevra kadisha*

54 Goldberg, *Crossing the Jabbok*, 130–135.

55 The *minḥag* (custom) of the *hakḳafot* is not mentioned in halakhic codes nor did it originate in medieval kabbalistic practices; rather, it seems to be a custom elaborated and disseminated by Sephardic Jews from Spain after the 1492 expulsion; Goldberg, *Crossing the Jabbok*, 133.

56 Richard Cohen, *Jewish Icons: Art and Society in Modern Europe* (Berkeley: 1998), 103–105.

57 Cohen, *Jewish Icons*, 101.

functioned as a model for the creation of broad networks of charity societies that served as the backbones of the social and cultural welfare in central and eastern European Jewish societies.⁵⁸

6 Conclusion

Jewish confraternities in medieval and early modern Europe left few records in comparison to the contemporary Christian world and modern (especially in the late 18th and the 19th centuries) Jewish communities,⁵⁹ but what has survived has allowed scholars to study them in different geographical contexts and within separate chronological frameworks. European *hevrot* provided Jewish individuals of the middle and lower classes (generally men but often also women) not only with a social and cultural welfare otherwise unthinkable, but at times also with the opportunity of an active political and social participation, for example by subverting the community internal political balance in medieval Aragon; creating new kind of networking and kinship in 17th-century Venice, Livorno, and Amsterdam; and fundamentally challenging women's marginalisation through fraternalism in 18th-century Modena.

While much has been done in these terms, a history of Jewish trans-regional fraternalism remains, however, a relatively unexplored topic. Future scholars might thus investigate the various ways in which Jewish societies negotiated the interplay between gradual integration and the maintenance of traditional networks and communal institutions; they might examine how acculturation, social proximity, class, and gender affected Jewish society in Europe by taking a comparative and interdisciplinary perspective on the history of Jewish confraternities. Ultimately, by looking at Jewish fraternalism from a global perspective we might be uniquely better positioned in situating early modern Jewry into a broader context that considers the early modern era in Western and Eastern Europe, as well as in the Ottoman Empire, through broad, holistic cultural patterns.

58 See for example Marcus, *Communal Sick-Care*; Katz, *Tradition and Modernity*; and more recently the splendid Benjamin Maria Baader, *Gender, Judaism, and Bourgeois Culture in Germany, 1800–1870* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: 2006).

59 For example, between 1745 and 1870, more than 160 Jewish women's associations were operating throughout German lands, many of them for decades; see Baader, *Gender, Judaism*, 161.

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PART 5

Arts and Letters



Singing Praises to God: Confraternities and Music

Jonathan Glixon

1 Introduction

In 1273, the bishop of Siena wrote of the activities of one of the confraternities in his diocese, “You gather together in peace to raise up your *laude* to God.”¹ From the earliest years, music played an important and sometimes primary role in the activities of lay confraternities. This article will explore these musical activities, including the singing of *laude*, the performance of sacred musical dramas, and the use of music in funerals, liturgical observances, processions, and patronal feasts, concentrating, as examples of the broader phenomenon, on confraternities of several types in Umbria, Tuscany, Venice, and several cities in the Low Countries.²

2 The *lauda*

The musical genre mentioned by the Sienese bishop, the *lauda* (plural, *laude*), a devotional song in the vernacular, arose in the 13th century in the Franciscan and Dominican context of central Italy. While the *lauda* may have emerged in the conventual context, it quickly became associated with lay confraternities in Umbria and Tuscany, both Marian organisations and those devoted to the discipline of penitential self-flagellation.³ Most of the extant *laudari*, including the two with music, were produced for these institutions. A large number

1 Cited in Blake Wilson, *Music and Merchants: The Laudesi Companies of Republican Florence* (Oxford: 1992), 40.

2 Notable studies of confraternity music in other cities include Noel O'Regan, *Institutional Patronage in Post-Tridentine Rome: Music at Santissima Trinità dei Pellegrini 1550–1650* (London: 1995); Reinhard Strohm, *Music in Late Medieval Bruges*, Chapter 4 (Oxford: 1985); Christine S. Getz, *Mary, Music, and Meditation: Sacred Conversations in Post-Tridentine Milan* (Bloomington: 2013); and William F. Prizer, “Popular Piety in Renaissance Mantua: the *Lauda* and Flagellant Confraternities” in *Qui Musicam in se Habet: Studies in Honor of Alejandro Enrique Planchart*, ed. Anna Zayaruznaya, (Middleton, WI: 2015).

3 The best brief survey of the *lauda* is Blake Wilson's entry in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (available through *Grove Music Online*.)

of text-only *laudari* are extant, containing varied poetry usually arranged by topic, with sections devoted to Mary, to the liturgical calendar, and sometimes to the saints. The two extant medieval *laudari* with music show a range of styles, from Gregorian chant-like to popular idioms. After the early years, most of the poetry was in forms related to the secular *ballata*, with production flourishing in 15th-century Florence by poets such as Feo Belcari (1410–1484). The Florentines also developed a particular musical approach: rather than setting the poetry to newly composed music, their standard method was to indicate a pre-existent melody, monophonic or polyphonic, that would be appropriate, the so-called *cantasi come* method.⁴

Daily gatherings to sing laude became the chief focus of Marian confraternities and other sodalities dedicated to saints, so much so that they became known as *laudese* confraternities. For confraternities that practiced flagellation, and became known as *disciplinati*, laude served as a spiritual accompaniment to their practice of the discipline.⁵

The daily meetings of a *laudese* company took place after compline at the altar it maintained in its host church, as outlined in the founding statutes of the Company of San Zanobi in Florence: “We ordain and establish that the entire company is to meet every evening in the aforesaid church of Madonna Santa Reparata to sing laude with the Ave Maria to the honor of God and Our Lady.”⁶ Until the middle of the 14th century, it was the brothers themselves, at least in part, who sang from the *laudario*, the book collecting the confraternity’s laude, usually organised, like liturgical manuscripts, according to the ecclesiastical calendar. To make this possible, the Florentine companies established schools to train the brothers, as, for example, at San Zanobi: “We order and establish that the rectors should see to it that on Sundays the singing of laude is taught to those who did not know them.”⁷ At some point in the 14th century, practices seem to have shifted, with the brothers singing only the refrains and two or three professional musicians doing the bulk of the singing. By the early

4 The extant sources of the northern tradition, particularly in the Veneto, with poetry especially from the circle of Leonardo Giustinian (1388–1446), and set to original polyphonic music, seem to be more connected with the monastic world than with confraternities. See Wilson’s entry in *New Grove*.

5 Both these groups, and the repertory of laude they produced, are surveyed in Cyrilla Barr, *The Monophonic Lauda and the Lay Religious Confraternities of Tuscany and Umbria in the Late Middle Ages* (Kalamazoo: 1988). The musical activities of the *laudesi* in the 15th century are discussed in Frank A. D’Accone, “Alcune note sulle compagnie fiorentine dei laudesi durante il Quattrocento,” *Rivista Italiana di Musicologia* 10 (1975): 86–114, and more broadly in Wilson, *Music and Merchants*.

6 Wilson, *Music and Merchants*, 60.

7 Wilson, *Music and Merchants*, 71.

15th century, professional singers, in ensembles eventually as large as eight singers, sometimes with players of string instruments or organ as well, took over entirely. For the ferial lauda services, the singers tended to be men whose chief profession was non-musical, but were known as specialists in the singing of laude. The *laudesi* also observed a full calendar of the principal feasts of the church year, celebrating each one with a vigil with laude (“vigilia alle laude”) the evening before the feast proper. The singers, whose numbers were often enhanced by the hiring of additional specialists, sang laude appropriate for the occasion, with the refrains sung by the assembled brothers and sometimes with the addition of instruments.⁸

The Tuscan and Umbrian penitential confraternities, the *disciplinati*, used the lauda quite differently. As the rules of the confraternity of San Stefano in Assisi explain, at a ferial gathering, often on a Friday, the brothers began by praying silently, then, at the sounds of a bell, they started the self-flagellation ritual: “immediately they rise and sing laude in the vernacular. He who sings them moves the hearts of the brothers to tears more than words move the mind [...] At the end of each stanza they scourge themselves. But while the cantor sings the lauda they rise, and at the sound of the bell or some other signal, they cease the discipline.”⁹ We know less about laude singers in the *disciplinati* groups than we do for the *laudesi*, but from the reference above to a “cantor” it seems that penitential confraternities also used specialist singers for their rituals.

The 16th century saw significant changes in the musical practices of both *laudesi* and *disciplinati*. The daily lauda services of the former and the regular penitential meetings of the latter both declined and eventually disappeared to be replaced by more formal liturgical observances. Similarly, the confraternities ended the practice of singing laude and, consequently, no longer employed professional lauda singers. For ferial occasions, musically trained priests now supplied whatever music might be required. An exception to this trend were the Florentine youth confraternities, such as the Company of the Archangel Raphael, where the lauda continued to be used into the 17th century in the education of the young men.¹⁰

8 Wilson, *Music and Merchants*, 47–49, 141–182.

9 Barr, *Monophonic Lauda*, 38.

10 On this confraternity, including its musical activities, see Konrad Eisenbichler, *The Boys of the Archangel Raphael: A Youth Confraternity in Florence, 1411–1785* (Toronto, 1998). On the continued use of laude there into the 17th century, see Eyolf Østrem and Nils Holger Petersen, “The Singing of *Laude* and Musical Sensibilities in Early Seventeenth-Century Confraternity Devotion,” *Journal of Religious History* 28 (2004): 276–297 and 29 (2005): 163–176.

3 Funerals

An important aspect of all confraternities was the provision of a funeral for deceased members. Their involvement included preparing the body at the deceased's home, participation in a procession to the church where the funeral would be held, attendance at the funeral mass, another procession to the place of burial (if the deceased was not being interred at the church), the burial itself, and, in some cases, a memorial service in the evening. The role of singing at these events for the Tuscan *disciplinati* companies varied.¹¹ The brothers of San Giovanni Battista in Florence sang at the burial "those prayers and laude which are suitable for that sad occasion"; those of San Domenico, also in Florence, sang laude at the beginning and end of the funeral itself; and those of Santa Croce of Cortona sang "the lauda on death" during the procession.

At the Venetian *scuole grandi*, the great confraternities founded in the 13th century as flagellant companies, the rituals were not very different, except that the singing was done by a small cadre of poor brothers with some degree of skill or training known variously as *cantadori di morti*, *cantadori di corpi*, or *cantadori vecchi* (singers of the dead, singers of the corpses, old singers).¹² When the brothers of San Giovanni Evangelista in Venice came to the home of the deceased, where the body had already been prepared, the singers, echoed by the rest of the brothers, sang three times "Jexu Cristo misericordia." At the burial, the singers sang "their song" ("el canto suo"), likely the same words as at the home.¹³ The singers of the Scuola di Santa Maria della Carità, on the other hand, sang what seems to be a lauda during the procession itself: "Our Lady Holy Mary, receive this sinner, and pray to Jesus Christ that he be pardoned" ("Madona Senta Maria, receve sto peccatore, fa vui prego a Ieso Christo ke la debia perdonare").¹⁴ The scuole paid their funeral singers a small amount for each funeral. Although most of these funerals were quite simple and the music limited, their overall impact on the city was considerable, as the six scuole had a combined membership of over 3,000. Not only were the numbers of funerals sometimes quite large (for example, eighty-nine funerals by the Scuola di San Marco in 1527 and sixty-eight in 1560, but they could be spread widely, with processions winding through large stretches of the city and funerals and burials at many different churches). Of the 84 funerals for the Scuola di San

11 Barr, *Monophonic Lauda*, 38–40.

12 Jonathan Glixon, *Honoring God and the City: Music at the Venetian Confraternities, 1260–1807* (New York, 2003), 72–75.

13 Venice, Archivio di Stato di Venezia, Scuola Grande di San Giovanni Evangelista 16.

14 Venice, Archivio di Stato di Venezia, Scuola Grande di Santa Maria della Carità 233 bis, Chapter 18.

Giovanni Evangelista in 1570, fifty-four included burials at the scuola's own cemetery (although some of the funeral masses were elsewhere), but the other thirty-five were at twenty-three other churches.¹⁵

The Florentine *laudesi* companies seem not to have required any singing at the processions, funeral, or burial, but did hold a lauda vigil the evening following the burial, likely an occasion for singing the lauda for the dead preserved in most extant *laudari*.¹⁶

4 Liturgical Observance

While the lauda played an important role in the observances of most Italian confraternities into the 16th century, formal liturgical observances were more widespread. In some cases music would have been limited to Gregorian chant sung by priests (and possibly also organ music), but many confraternities hired musicians to perform more elaborate works, as in a 1492 decision by the council of the Scuola Grande di San Marco in Venice:

Although our confraternity used to have eight singers of polyphony to honour the masses and vespers of the feasts and other solemnities of this our confraternity, of those eight, only four are found at present. Because among the other ornaments at such solemnities such singers are much to be commended [...] maestro Piero de Fosis [three names follow] has offered to supplement the said eight [...].¹⁷

De Fosis was none other than the maestro di cappella of the Ducal Basilica of San Marco, and the other three were members of the choir; in other words, the scuola hired the best musicians in the city. Through the 16th century, all six scuole grandi employed an ensemble of four or five professional singers, usually from San Marco or one of the major religious houses of the city, to sing at vespers and mass for the major feast days. Following a series of financial problems in the early 17th century, most of the scuole grandi abandoned this

15 Glixon, *Honoring God*, 75.

16 Wilson, *Music and Merchants*, 53.

17 "Consit che la Schuola nostra soleva aver 8 chantadori de chanto figurado per onorar le messe et vespori de feste et altri solenità de questa nostra Schuola, dal qual 8 al presente se ne trova solum 4. Et perchè tra altri ornamenti molto è da comendar a simile solenità simel chantadori, et avendose oferto maestro Piero de Fosis [three more names follow] de esser a suplimento dei diti 8 [...]." Venice, Archivio di Stato di Venezia, Scuola Grande di Santa Marco 16bis, Part 2, fol. 62. See Glixon, *Honoring God*, 96.

practice. Through to the end of the 18th century, the two scuole that had their own churches, San Giovanni Evangelista and San Rocco, hired instead choirs of priests who performed simpler polyphony for the mass.¹⁸ Rare survivors of this sort of repertoire, apparently widespread in churches in Venice and elsewhere, are two large choir books prepared for San Rocco, the first in 1754, containing seven mass ordinaries, eight Credo's, and several motets, some in simple two- four-voice counterpoint, and others alternating solo voice (likely to be accompanied by organ) with *falsobordone*, a kind of harmonised recitation. In 1775, the copyist of the scuola's choir added two more masses and a credo to that manuscript and prepared a second book with five more masses and ten motets.¹⁹

Polyphonic music at the highest level was central to the religious observances of many of the confraternities in the Low Countries starting in the 14th century and reaching a highpoint in the late 15th and 16th centuries. The musical activities of confraternities in Antwerp are particularly well documented, especially at the Church (later cathedral) of Onze Lieve Vrouwe.²⁰ From the early 15th century on, this church maintained a professional polyphonic choir (directed in the years around 1500 by Jacob Obrecht (1457–1505), one of the most famous composers of the day) and a school for choirboys who served the choir as sopranos. This choir also sang for the six lay confraternities housed in the church, among them that of Our Lady, the most famous Marian confraternity in the Low Countries. One aspect of this institution's practice was the performance of a daily *lof* service after Vespers that featured a polyphonic setting of the Salve Regina (later, the Marian antiphon appropriate for the season). Each of the six confraternities in this church also sponsored a weekly votive mass and celebrated major feast days throughout the year (more than a dozen at the confraternity of Our Lady, fewer at the others). On each of these occasions, the confraternity paid a choir of twelve or more adults (supplementing the twelve from the church choir with outside singers), to which that of Our Lady added a similar number of choirboys. Organists and, on more solemn occasions, instrumentalists, also performed. To meet their needs for repertoire, Belgian confraternities commissioned music manuscripts from the most important scriptoria that included polyphonic masses and motets by both local and internationally known composers. The most notable extant collection is

18 For a detailed study of this changing practices and more at the Venetian confraternities, see Glixon, *Honoring God*.

19 See Glixon, *Honoring God*, 177.

20 See Kristine K. Forney, "Music, Ritual and Patronage at the Church of Our Lady, Antwerp." *Early Music History* 7 (1987): 1–57. On Bruges, see Reinhard Strohm, *Music in Late Medieval Bruges* (Oxford: 1985), Chap. 4.

that of the Illustre Lieve Vrouwe Broederschap in 's-Hertogenbosch. Around 1530 this confraternity commissioned manuscripts from one of the most famous musical scribes of the day, Petrus Alamire. The three manuscripts, still in the collection of the confraternity, contain twenty-four masses and nine motets, by some of the most prominent composers of the period, including Pierre de la Rue, Jean Mouton, and Adrian Willaert.²¹ In the following decades they commissioned or purchased several more manuscripts with music of the next generation of composers.

5 Dramatic Laude, *Sacre rappresentazioni*, Sacred Dialogues, and Oratorios

Many confraternities, especially those in Tuscany and Umbria, enhanced their observances of certain occasions of the church calendar, particularly Lent and Holy Week, but also other times, with the performance of works that combined music and drama. The earliest form of this practice was tied to the lauda, namely what are known as dramatic laude, poems that enact events such as the *mandatum* (the washing of the feet on Maundy Thursday) or the Passion (for Good Friday). An excellent example of the latter is the lauda *Levate gl'ochi*, which consists of a dialogue between the grieving Mary and her sisters.²² These dramatic laude expanded over time into full-fledged plays, the *sacre rappresentazioni*.²³ At one Florentine confraternity in particular, the Compagnia dell'Arcangelo Raffaello, this tradition continued and developed over the next few centuries. Founded as a confraternity for the education of young men aged 13 to 24, the Arcangelo Raffaello used the *sacra rappresentazione*, performed by the youths themselves, as an educational tool. In the 16th century, the membership came to be made up more and more of adults (as youths remained in the organisation past the official age limit). Among these were some of the most eminent composers and performers in the city, notably Jacopo Peri (1561–1633), Giulio Caccini (1551–1618), and Marco da Gagliano (1582–1643), all at the forefront of the new Baroque genres of monody (accompanied solo song) and opera, along with various other members of the Camerata de' Bardi.²⁴ On some

21 Forney, "Music, Ritual," 32–39. On manuscripts for a confraternity in 's-Hertogenbosch, see Véronique Roelvink, "The Alamire manuscripts of the Illustre Lieve Vrouwe Broederschap in 's-Hertogenbosch: New facts and considerations," *Yearbook of the Alamire Foundation* 5 (2003): 203–213.

22 Barr, *Monophonic Lauda*, 41–58.

23 See Nerida Newbigin chapter in this volume.

24 Eisenbichler, *The Boys of the Archangel Raphael*, 236.

of the occasions where longer plays might have been performed in the past, the confraternity now produced shorter dramatic works in the newest styles of accompanied solo song, pieces perhaps best referred to as sacred dialogues.²⁵ A notable instance of such a performance occurred on All Saints Day in 1622, as described in a contemporary account:

In the evening the Office of the Dead was sung with very good music for two choirs. And before and after the said office, a short dialogue [*uno Dialoghetto*] in music was sung, for which [the singers] pretended to be souls in purgatory which [souls] were begging to be free from their pains. And the angel, consoling them, promised [deliverance] to them by means of the Office that was [about] to be celebrated. And after [the Office] was finished, the angel repeated that they [the souls] had been liberated, and thus they flew to heaven, thanking the brothers for the prayers and suffrages offered. The whole was the composition of messer Jacopo Cicognini, which inspired great devotion in everyone.²⁶

By the later 17th century and into the 18th, the Arcangelo Raffaele and several other Florentine confraternities replaced staged and acted dramas with oratorios, works that presented the same biblical stories and saints' lives in what we would now describe as concert form, employing instruments, solo singers, and choir, but without costumes, scenery, or action. In most cases, these were presented in the oratory adjoining a confraternity's meeting hall. Although no single confraternity produced as many oratorios as the Congregation of the Oratory of St Philip Neri (also known as the Oratorians), as a group the confraternities made an important impact, presenting nearly 300 works before 1785 (according to Hill, 288 libretti for these performances are extant). The confraternities offered these oratorios to the public free of charge and, unlike the Oratorians, regularly admitted women.²⁷ For reasons that are not entirely clear, the numbers of oratorios presented by Florentine confraternities declined drastically over the first half of the 18th century.

25 On these developments see John Walter Hill, "Oratory Music in Florence, 1: 'Recitar Cantando,' 1583–1655," *Acta Musicologica* 51 (1979): 108–136 and Eisenbichler, *The Boys of the Archangel Raphael*, Chaps. 16–18.

26 Translation by John Walter Hill; see Hill, "Oratory Music in Florence, 1," 121–122.

27 John Walter Hill, "Oratory music in Florence. 111: The Confraternities from 1655 to 1785," *Acta Musicologica* 58 (1986): 129–179.

6 Processions

Processions, both inside churches and through the streets of the city, were significant aspects of the activities of many medieval and early-modern confraternities. The brotherhoods of Antwerp, for example, participated in the city's *ommegangen*, city-wide religious processions for major feasts and in honour of important relics, and the Archconfraternity of the Santissima Trinità in Rome provided notable music for Holy Thursday and Good Friday processions.²⁸ For the *scuole grandi* of Venice, processions not only displayed the brothers' religious devotion to Mary and the saints, but also expressed their role as representatives of the citizen and merchant classes in the Venetian social fabric. The earliest charters of these confraternities, from the middle of the 13th century, listed a variety of processions of several types. At Santa Maria della Carità, these included celebratory ones for the four Marian feasts, civic processions for St. Mark and the Ascension, and penitential processions to the cathedral of San Pietro di Castello on Good Friday and on the Day of the Dead.²⁹ Over the years, the calendars evolved, with the Marian processions replaced by additional civic occasions and the substitution of Corpus Christi for the Ascension.

The earliest documents of the *scuole grandi* make no mention of music in processions, but by the 15th century references to singers and *laude* become frequent. Until the middle of that century, the brothers themselves provided the music, but by 1500 all the *scuole* employed an ensemble of four to six singers known as *cantadori de laude* (differentiated from the *cantadori di morti*, for funerals, described above). At first these were semi-professionals, who normally plied other trades, but within a few decades they were drawn from the Doge's choir at San Marco or from the major monastic houses of the city. The *scuole* also hired instrumentalists for these occasions. The earliest references are to wind players, *pifari*, but these may have served simply to announce the feast. An ensemble of several players of lute, harp, and fiddle became the norm from the 1470s until the 1530s, replaced then by a four- or five-piece violin band. The earlier ensemble and that of the singers of the Scuola di San Giovanni

28 On the former, see Forney, "Music, Ritual, and Patronage," 26–31; on the latter, see O'Regan, *Institutional Patronage*, 43–46 and 107. Florentine confraternity processions are discussed in Eisenbichler, *The Boys of the Archangel Raphael*, chap. 13 and in Wilson, *Music and Merchants*.

29 Glixon, *Honoring God*, 44.

Evangelista are depicted in Gentile Bellini's famous painting of the procession in Piazza San Marco. While in general this painting is known for its accurate portrayals, Bellini seems to have taken some license here, depicting them as performing together, as the documents all indicate that the two ensembles would have been in different parts of the procession.³⁰

It is not clear what the musicians performed for the civic processions or where along the route. A 1521 guide for San Rocco indicates, for example, that in the procession for Corpus Christi, the singers walk, singing, in front of the officers ("cantadori di canto vanno avanti dela Bancha cantando").³¹ For processions by the Scuola di San Giovanni Evangelista commemorating miracles performed by its famous relic of the Holy Cross, however, the singers were instructed to sing a lauda when the brothers arrived at the site of the miracle.³² On Palm Sunday and the Sundays of Lent, the scuola followed a winding path to the other end of the city to visit the cathedral of San Pietro di Castello, stopping on the way and during the return at various nunneries and monasteries, singing a lauda at each one:

The following visits are made, and first:

At San Salvatore [Augustinian canons], and a lauda is sung
 At Santo Sepolcro [Franciscan nuns], and a lauda is sung
 At San Giuseppe [in Castello; Augustinian nuns], and a lauda is sung
 At the Ospedale of Jesus Christ, that is in the church, and a lauda is sung
 At Sant'Antonio [Augustinian canons], and a lauda is sung
 At Sant'Anna [Benedictine nuns], and a lauda is sung
 At San Pietro in Castello [the Cathedral], ... a lauda is sung
 [...] and on the way back we go Santa Maria delle Vergini [Augustinian canonesses] and a lauda is sung there
 At San Daniele [Augustinian nuns], and a lauda is sung
 At the Madonna of the Arsenal [a votive church], and a lauda is sung
 At the Ospedale di San Martino, and a lauda is sung there
 At Santa Maria della Celestia [Cistercian nuns], and a lauda is sung there
 At San Lorenzo [Benedictine nuns], and a lauda is sung there
 At San Zaccaria [Benedictine nuns], and a lauda is sung there

30 On the instrumentalists, see Glixon, *Honoring God*, 129–138. An image of this painting is available online at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File%3AAccademia_-_Procession_in_piazza_San_Marco_by_Gentile_Bellini.jpg.

31 Scuola Grande Arciconfraternita di San Rocco, *Libro de ordeni*. See Glixon, *Honoring God*, 54–55.

32 Glixon, *Honoring God*, 63–65.

At San Marco, and at the altar of the Most Holy Sacrament a lauda is sung, and then we go home.³³

The scuole also participated in the extraordinary processions organised by the Serenissima to honour distinguished guests or celebrate important events. At these occasions, focused on Piazza San Marco, each scuola processed with elaborate floats, depicting allegorical figures or referring to the event being celebrated. Often, these floats included musicians, apparently specially hired for the occasion. At the procession in 1585 to honour some visiting Japanese princes, San Rocco's participation included several floats with music. One had King David "in royal dress, with a harp in his hand, which he played most sweetly," and another the adoration of the shepherds: "on a platform, the shepherds in their manger played [instruments] for joy, and an angel above sang to them *Gloria in excelsis Deo*."³⁴ Similar floats were carried at the procession celebrating the 1598 peace treaty between Henry IV of France and Philip II of Spain. The Scuola di Santa Maria della Misericordia came with "a beautiful woman, costumed as Peace, accompanied on the same float by a marvellous and most noble consort of lutes, which played most excellently, and gave everybody pleasure," and the Scuola di San Teodoro brought a float with "God, the Eternal Father, who was on the globe of the world, and at the feet of whom were five good musicians, who sang with beautiful melody, thanking His Divine Majesty for the peace granted to those two kings."³⁵

33 "Se fa le infraschrite visitation, et prima: / A San Salvador si canta una laude / A Santo Sepulcro, et si canta una laude / A Santo Ixepo, et se canta una laude / Al'Ospedal de misser Jesu Cristo, cioè in la giesia, et se canta una laude / A Santo Antonio, et se canta una laude / Santa Ana, et se canta una laude // A San Piero de Castelo, et li soto confesion se canta una laude [...] et al. ritorno se va ala Madona dele Verzene, et li se canta una laude. / San Daniel, et se canta una laude. / Ala Madona del'Arsenal se canta una laude / Al'Ospedal de San Martin, et li se canta una laude / A Santa Maria dela Celestia, et li se canta una laude / A San Lorenzo, et li se canta una laude / A San Zacharia, et li se canta una laude // A San Marco, et a lo altar delo Santissimo Sachramento se canta una laude, et poi si vano a caxa." Venice, Archivio di Stato, Scuola Grande di San Giovanni Evangelista 16, "Feste."

34 "vestito regalmente, con arpa in mano, con la quale soavissimamente suonava"; "i Pastori sopra un palco, che nella loro capanna per allegrezza suonavano, & un'Angelo gli soprastava cantanto, *Gloria in excelsis Deo*." Francesco Sansovino, *Venetia città nobilissima* (Venice, 1663), 463; see Glixon, *Honoring God*, 57.

35 "una bellissima donna, figurata per la Pace, accompagnata sopra il solaro istesso da un maraviglioso, & nobilissimo concerto di liuti, che eccellentissimamente suonavano, & davano a tutti contento"; "Iddio Padre Eterno, & stava sopra la palla del Mondo, & à i piedi di quella erano cinque valenti Musici, che cantavano con somma melodia, ringratiando sua Divina Maestà della Pace, data à questi due Rè." Sansovino, *Venetia*, 433–434; see Glixon, *Honoring God*, 57.

7 Patronal Feasts

Many confraternities devoted extra effort and money to celebrating the feast day of their patron saint, often hiring external musicians to supplement their regular vocal and instrumental ensembles.³⁶ This was especially true of Venice, where the *scuole grandi* (as well as many of the hundreds of smaller confraternities, the *scuole piccole*) created occasions that attracted not only Venetians with no connection to the brotherhood, but even foreigners, especially those seeking out extraordinary music. This practice can be traced to the early 16th century, when, in 1517, the Scuola di San Marco engaged the maestro di cappella of San Marco Piero de Fossis along with eleven of his singers to “every year at the vigil of [the feast of] Saint Mark come to our confraternity and in our hall sing vespers with the usual solemnity, and then the day of the feast [25 April] in the morning come to sing the mass and then after the meal, vespers.”³⁷ In 1535, the Scuola di Santa Maria della Misericordia engaged Adrian Willaert (1490–1562), then maestro di cappella at San Marco, and two companies of instrumentalists for the feast of the Conception of the Virgin (8 September), for a combined fee of twenty-four ducats.

As the 16th century progressed, the *scuole* continued to increase expenditures for the annual feast, when their finances allowed it, but none more than San Rocco, by this time clearly the wealthiest of all. The extant payment records, from the late 16th century through the 1630s record the employment not only of the singers and instrumentalists of San Marco, but also dozens of other musicians, sometimes brought from elsewhere in Italy, including some of the most famous singers and players of the day, including Giovanni Gabrieli (1557–1612), Claudio Monteverdi (1567–1643), and Francesco Cavalli (1602–1676).³⁸ In all, the nearly 100 musicians hired for just one day cost the scuola an average of more than 200 ducats. The results, not surprisingly, were extraordinary, as described by the English traveller Thomas Coryat after attending the event in 1608:

36 For Florentine examples, see Eisenbichler, *The Boys of San Raphael*, and Wilson, *Music and Merchants*.

37 “hogni anno la vezilia de misser San Marcho vegnir ala schola nostra et in la sala nostra chantar el vespero con le solenità consuete, e poi el zorno dela festa la matina vegnir a chantar la messa et da poi dixnar el vespero.” Venice, Archivio di Stato, Scuola Grande di San Marco 17, fol. 74. On the annual feasts of the *scuole grandi*, see Glixon, *Honoring God*, 149–161 and 184–188.

38 See Glixon, *Honoring God*, 284–287.

This feast consisted principally of Musicke, which was both vocall and instrumentall, so good, so delectable, so rare, so admirable, so super excellent, that it did even ravish and stupifie all those strangers that never heard the like. But how others were affected with it I know not; for mine owne part I can say this, that I was for the time even rapt up with Saint Paul into the third heaven. Sometimes there sung sixteene or twenty men together, having their master or moderator to keepe them in order; and when they sung, the instrumentall musitians played also. Sometimes sixteene played together upon their instruments, ten Sagbuts, Cornets, and two Violdegambaes of an extraordinary greatnesse; sometimes ten, six Sagbuts and foure Cornets; sometimes two, a Cornet and a treble violl. Of those treble viols I heard three severall there, whereof each was so good, especially one that I observed above the rest, that I never heard the like before. Those that played upon the treble viols, sung and played together, and sometimes two singular fellowes played together upon Theorboes, to which they sang also, who yeelded admirable sweet musicke, but so still that they could scarce be heard but by those that were very neare them. These two Theorbists concluded that nights musicke, which continued three whole howers at the least. For they beganne about five of the clocke, and ended not before eight. Also it continued as long in the morning: at every time that every severall musicke played, the Organs, whereof there are seven faire paire in that room, standing al in a rowe together, plaied with them. Of the singers there were three or foure so excellent that I thinke few or none in Christendome do excell them, especially one, who had such a peerlesse and (as I may in a manner say) such a supernaturall voice for the sweetnesse that I thinke there was never a better singer in all the world, insomuch that he did not onely give the most pleasant contentment that could be imagined, to all the hearers, but also did as it were astonish and amaze them [...]³⁹

In the later 17th and early 18th centuries, documentation for the annual feast at the scuole is scarce, but it is clear that it continued as a significant event. The feast of Saint Roch (16 August) received a boost in 1748 when Rome approved a proper liturgy for the occasion and the event was added to the official calendar of visits by the Doge. The music in the latter part of the century was often directed by the maestro of San Marco, such as Baldassare Galuppi (1706–1785)

39 Thomas Coryat, *Coryat's Crudities* (Glasgow, 1905), 1:390–391.

in 1759, or another important musician of the city. Detailed documentation on the performers is scarce, but one undated 18th-century pay sheet for the occasion lists ten singers, six violins, three violas, cello, bass, trumpet, oboe, and organ—far fewer than in the first half of the 17th century, but still sufficient to provide a splendid occasion.⁴⁰

The halls and churches of the scuole were not designed to provide space for the large number of musicians brought in for the annual feast, so the practice developed (as it did in most churches in Venice and elsewhere) of constructing a temporary platform for the musicians, usually known as a *palco*, at a cost of about twenty or thirty ducats.⁴¹ In 1774, however, tired of damaging their newly renovated floor, the officers of the Scuola di Santa Maria della Misericordia petitioned the government for permission to build a more permanent structure that could be dismantled and reassembled each year. Their request to spend the required 800 ducats was denied. A few years later, that already large sum was dwarfed by the amount spent by the Scuola di San Rocco for a similar structure for their church. This multi-level *cantoria*, built of wood and stucco, which covered the entire entrance wall of the church, surrounding the organ and the permanent choir loft, cost the astounding sum of 4,850 ducats. Surprisingly, this structure has survived to the present day and was recently restored and re-installed in the church.⁴² Once again, therefore, the Scuola Grande di San Rocco, the only Venetian scuola to operate continuously through the suppressions following the fall of the Republic and to the present, on the occasion of its annual feast and at other times during the year, offers outstanding music to residents and visitors of Venice, providing a living reminder of the role confraternities played in the culture of medieval and early modern cities.

8 Conclusions and Directions for Future Research

Although sometimes passed over by historians, music, it is clear, played an important role in the activities of medieval and early modern confraternities. Similarly, musicologists have often neglected the important role confraternities played in the musical lives of their cities.

Confraternities sponsored or performed music, both instrumental and vocal on a wide range of regular and extraordinary occasions. Some of these activities were daily, such as the vigils with laude, at first sung by the brothers

40 Archivio di Stato di Venezia, Scuola Grande di San Rocco, seconda consegna 421, loose sheet, unnumbered and undated.

41 On these platforms, see Glixon, *Honoring God*, 187–188.

42 For images of the restored *cantoria*, see <https://youtu.be/VKjYKv4A5Bk>.

themselves, and later by professionals, at the *laudese* companies of Florence or the polyphonic *Salve Regina* services of brotherhoods in Antwerp. The Antwerp societies also sponsored weekly votive masses employing substantial choirs of the best male singers, both men and boys, in the city. Many confraternities, such as the *scuole grandi* of Venice, had extensive liturgical calendars, celebrating important saints' days, and especially their annual patronal feast, with elaborate music. Civic and religious processions were also occasions for confraternities to offer music. The *scuole grandi*, in addition to elaborate religious processions during Lent and Holy Week, were official participants, along with their singers and instrumentalists, at the great Venetian civic processions.

Beyond the regularly scheduled daily, weekly, and annual events, confraternities had a musical presence at irregular and extraordinary events. Most companies provided a funeral for deceased brothers, often with some sort of music either during the funeral procession or during the funeral itself. Some confraternities, particularly in Tuscany and Umbria, offered dramatic performances of sacred stories, both as dramatic laude and in the form of *sacre rappresentazioni*. Florentine youth confraternities, in particular the Archangel Raphael, continued this tradition into the early modern era, performing sacred dialogues and later oratorios in the most up-to-date musical styles. Some confraternities, for example the Venetian *scuole grandi*, were also called upon to participate in extraordinary events such as processions to celebrate victories or welcome important visitors, sometimes carrying allegorical floats with musicians.

To date, musicologists have studied confraternity music in only a handful of cities in Italy and the Low Countries, in some cases limited to only a portion of the companies or for a limited chronological period. Since confraternities were ubiquitous in the Catholic world, there is clearly much work still to be done. While the actual music appears not to be extant for most of these institutions, their documents are preserved in both state and diocesan archives (and in some cases *in situ*). It is, of course, impossible to know what is yet to be discovered, but it is almost certain that investigating the records of almost any city, large or small, will turn up traces, sometimes extensive, of confraternity musical activities.

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Serio Ludere: Confraternities and Drama in Central Italy, 1400–1600

Nerida Newbiggin

1 Introduction

In exploring drama in Italian confraternities, this chapter leaves aside the ritual and ceremonial to concentrate on performances where text plays a significant role, and explores how and why confraternities engaged in play-making. It looks briefly at the plays of Umbria and Rome before turning to Florence, where library and archival resources are particularly rich, and where the intersection of play-writing and printing has left a substantial patrimony.

2 The Penitential Confraternities of Umbria

The processions of 1260 that preceded the founding of lay confraternities in Perugia and beyond were performances of penitence, accompanied by ritual self-flagellation and song, but the point at which their vernacular *laude* became theatre is not known.¹ The confraternities composed rules to govern their existence, acquired property through gifts and bequests, and kept accounts of their activities and their assets. They collected their *laude*, their penitential hymns, into *laudari*, and it is among these *laudari* that we find the earliest monologues and dialogues that might be termed plays.

From the middle of the 14th century we find *laude* in the form of monologues and dialogues that imply a dramatic element. A single *cantor* in the person of the Virgin or the Marys addressed Christ on the Cross and lamented his

¹ See Ernesto Monaci, “Appunti per la storia del teatro italiano: uffizj drammatici dei Disciplinati dell’Umbria,” *Rivista di filologia romanza* 1 (1874): 235–271; 2 (1875): 29–42; Alessandro D’Ancona, *Origini del teatro italiano*, 2nd ed. (Turin: 1891); and Vincenzo De Bartholomaeis, *Le origini della poesia drammatica* (1924; 2nd ed. 1952), rpt. as *Origini della poesia drammatica* (Lucca: 2009). On methodologies of analysis of confraternal drama and other spectacles, see Paola Ventrone, “I teatri delle confraternite in Italia fra XIV e XVI secolo,” in *Studi confraternali: orientamenti, problemi, testimonianze*, (ed.) Marina Gazzini (Florence: 2009), 293–316, <<http://www.rm.unina.it/rmebook/dwnld/Gazzini.pdf>>.

Passion, or in the name of sinners sought the Virgin's intercession. Such *laude* were part of the Friday devotions of the *confratelli*, and other days that commemorated the Passion, and were accompanied by self-flagellation.² It seems possible that these earliest *laude* also accompanied devotions around an extraordinary number of 12th- and 13th-century polychrome wooden Deposition groups, hinged and jointed life-sized figures representing Christ on the Cross, the Virgin, Mary Magdalene, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus.³

Easter remained the most important devotion. After intensive attendance at Lenten sermons, the *confratelli* participated in the devotions of Holy Week: the observance of *Tenebrae*, a re-enactment of the Last Supper and foot-washing, and the singing of penitential psalms. At the same time, the *laude* themselves became more complex. The great 14th-century Perugian *laudari*, rediscovered only in the 19th century,⁴ suggest that the *confratelli* met throughout Lent and Easter, and on feast days throughout the year. Taking the lead, no doubt, both from the semi-dramatic gospel readings of Holy Week, and from the Easter plays in Latin that had been performed for centuries in monastic and ecclesiastic contexts, vernacular plays emerged that enacted the events of Holy Week in elaborate detail. The most enduring of these, the Maundy Thursday play, *Sengnor scribe, or que facemo*, is found in the Perugian *laudari*, compiled in the 14th century from material already in circulation and drawing in particular on the repertoire of the confraternity of San Domenico. An inventory of that confraternity from 1339 shows a simple but extensive collection of costumes: cloaks and veils, mostly black but also in other colours, cotton wimples, caps with hair

2 See, for example, the *Ordo ad faciendum disciplinam* of the confraternity of Santo Stefano (possibly before 1329), Assisi, Archivio Capitolare di San Rufino, 20, discussed in Mara Nerbano, *Il teatro della devozione: confraternite e spettacolo nell'Umbria medievale*, 2nd rev. ed. (Perugia: 2007), 45–55; and “Statuto della fraternita dei disciplinati di S. Stefano,” (ed.) Enrico Menestò, in *Le fraternite medievali di Assisi: linee storiche e testi statutari*, H Ugolino Nicolini, Enrico Menestò and Francesco Santucci (Assisi: 1989), 233–270.

3 For the Deposition *lauda*, see Francesco Santucci, “‘Lauda della Scavigliazione’ della Fraternita dei Disciplinati di S. Stefano di Assisi (xiv ex.),” *Atti dell'Accademia Proporziana del Subasio*, ser. 6, 22 (1994): 243–263; see also Kamil Kopania, *Animated Sculptures of the Crucified Christ in the Religious Culture of the Latin Middle Ages* (Warsaw: 2010), esp. 44–51; and *Il teatro delle statue: gruppi lignei di Deposizione e Annunciazione tra XII e XIII secolo*, (ed.) Francesca Flores D'Arcais (Milan: 2005).

4 Monaci, “Appunti”; *Laude drammatiche e rappresentazioni sacre*, (ed.) Vincenzo De Bartholomaeis, 3 vols (Florence: 1943); *Il movimento dei disciplinati nel settimo centenario dal suo inizio* (Perugia 1260), (Perugia: 1962); *Il laudario assisano 36 (dall'Archivio di San Rufino)*, (eds.) Maurizio Perugi and Gina Scentoni (Perugia and Assisi: 2007); *Il laudario perugino*, (eds.) Maurizio Perugi and Gina Scentoni, 2 vols (Perugia: 2011–2012); Mara Nerbano, “Confraternite disciplinate e spazi della devozione,” in *Brotherhood and Boundaries / Fraternità e barriere*, (eds.) Stefania Pastore, Adriano Prosperi and Nicholas Terpstra (Pisa: 2011), 31–49.

attached, wigs and beards, a tunic for the Lord on Good Friday, gloves, a halo for Christ and wings and haloes for the angels.

Following in the tradition of the Franciscan *Meditations on the Life of Christ*, which were rendered more immediate and transcendental by flagellation, the earliest plays induced a mystical experience of Christ's suffering.⁵ In Perugia, Assisi, and later Orvieto, the plays move from the painted spaces of the oratory to the church, the piazza, and the street, and quickly become part of a lively vernacular and civic culture.⁶ A description of the Perugian Passion of 1448, in the "theatrical" piazza next to the city's cathedral church of San Lorenzo, shows how civic space was used to supplement charismatic preaching with performance and audience participation.⁷ Such performances in public spaces were not always the work of confraternities. The great Passion play performed in Revello from 1475 onwards was funded and managed by the *communitas* of Revello,⁸ and no such play could go ahead unless it was wholly acceptable to both civic and ecclesiastical authorities.

3 The Confraternity of the Gonfalone in Rome

While the Umbrian *laude liriche* spread all over Italy, the *laude drammatiche*—also called *devozioni*—were diffused through Abruzzo and Lazio but survive in much smaller numbers.⁹ They reached a particular fame in late 15th-century Rome, in the plays performed annually by the Confraternity of the Gonfalone.¹⁰

5 *Meditations on the Life of Christ*, (eds.) Isa Ragusa and Rosalie B. Green, trans. Isa Ragusa (Princeton, NJ: 1961).

6 For the Orvieto plays of the early 15th century, see *Laudario orvietano*, (ed.) Gina Scentoni (Spoleto: 1994); and for the rich documentation of performances, Mara Nerbano, "Play and Record: Ser Tommaso di Silvestro and the Theatre of Medieval and Early Modern Orvieto," *European Medieval Drama* 8 (2004): 127–172; and her *Il teatro della devozione*.

7 Francesco Bonaini, Ariodante Fabretti, and Filippo Luigi Polidori, "Cronaca della città di Perugia dal 1309 al 1491, nota col nome di *Diario del Graziani*," *Archivio storico italiano* 16 (1850): 69–750 (599), translated in Barbara Wisch and Nerida Newbigin, *Acting on Faith: The Confraternity of the Gonfalone in Renaissance Rome* (Philadelphia: 2013), 265–266.

8 *La Passione di Revello*, (ed.) Anna Cornagliotti (Turin: 1976); Marco Piccat, *Rappresentazioni popolari e feste in Revello nella metà del xv secolo* (Turin: 1986).

9 See D'Ancona's edition of a Veneto copy dated 1375 of two Umbrian *devozioni* in Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale (hereafter BNCf), Palatino 170: Alessandro D'Ancona, "Due antiche 'devozioni' italiane," *Rivista di filologia romanza* 2 (1875): 5–28. The text was already in *ottava rima* but in serious disarray; it is particularly rich in its stage directions and copied with great care.

10 *Il teatro abruzzese del Medioevo*, (eds.) Vincenzo De Bartholomaeis with Luigi Rivera (Bologna: 1924); Marco Vattasso, *Per la storia del dramma sacro in Italia* (Rome: 1903); and Wisch and Newbigin, *Acting on Faith*, esp. Chapters 10–12.

The survival of a huge archive, lodged in the Archivio Segreto Vaticano after the demise of the Confraternity in 1911, has made it possible to reconstruct a good part of the history of the Gonfalone plays. When the confraternity was formed from the union in 1486 of six small and somewhat dysfunctional flagellant confraternities that shared a devotion to the Virgin, one of them was already responsible for annual plays. John Capgrave, a visitor to Rome for the Jubilee of 1450, described seeing the Passion performed in front of the church of Santa Croce in Gerusalemme on Good Friday, when that basilica was the Station church. After visiting and touching the holy relics and seeing the play, pilgrims who were confessed and contrite could receive plenary indulgence. In 1487, the plays were transferred to San Giovanni in Laterano and included a play of the Resurrection (presumably preceded by the Harrowing of Hell) on Easter Saturday, when that Basilica was the Station Church. To further consolidate their union, the *confratelli* combined their resources to perform the Passion inside the Colosseum, on a grassy elevated section of the ruins where they were granted use in 1490 of certain houses and buildings located in the amphitheatre, in which they were able to store their props from year to year. A new text was prepared by a Florentine priest and vernacular poet, Giuliano Dati, who was one of the confraternity's chaplains as well as "penitentiarius utrius basilicae." The work was quickly printed, and its title page, *La passione di Christo historiata in rima vulgari secondo che recita e representa de parala a parola la dignissima compagnia de la Confalone di Roma lo Venerdì santo in luocho dicto Coliseo* [Rome: c.1496], gives the impression that the text and the performance were immutable. The *Passion*, soon joined by a *Lazarus* play and a *Resurrection*, remained in print long after the plays were banned in 1539 (following a brawl in the Jewish quarter as the actors returned to their oratory), but the account-books and drafts preserved in the archive reveal a different story: a text in constant flux, with miracles from the ministry of Christ added and subtracted, and a perpetual tussle between Judas and Christ to be the focus of the dramatic action.

According to the 1495 *Statutes*, compiled a decade after the union of the smaller groups, the primary purpose of the new confraternity was to perform the Passion. It prescribes in some detail the process of organising the Easter plays each year and is by far the fullest set of directions we possess:

On the Passion of our Lord and other plays—Chapter xxxxi

Since the origin and foundation of this venerable company is the performance every year of the Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ and of other mysteries or martyrdoms of saints, as the members of the company as a whole shall determine, we resolve and ordain that the supervisors,

as set out above, may spend each year on the Passion twenty-five ducats, not including the suppers, or more after discussion, as is set out in the chapter on the supervisors, and they may have it performed in our place in the Colosseum or in any other place determined by the company, short or long, as the supervisors shall determine. And the other officials and the men of the company shall be required to help them in everything, especially in finding properties and musicians, and in organising for the musicians, when they meet or rehearse the Passion, a decent meal and supper where and when the supervisors ask them to. Further, the wardens shall be required publicise it in the usual places, and especially to the preachers, whom they are to exhort to expedite their sermons so that they do not delay the Passion. And on Good Friday, no man of our company may come on to the stage or any other place set up for the flagellants without his habit, on pain of being convicted for false swearing and being recorded in the *Specchio* ledger among the transgressors, except for the one warden nominated by the supervisors, and the treasurer and up to six supervisors, and other persons who might be necessary for some purpose in the Passion, dressed in some costume appropriate to the Passion and other plays, each with the warden and treasurer and supervisors. The other wardens and other office-bearers and the men of the company shall be required to gather in Santa Lucia at the service, and there they are to attire themselves devoutly in their habits which each one is to have at home before the day, and then they shall come in procession with the crucifix to the Colosseum and arrange themselves in the place that the supervisors have prepared for them, and they are to stay there in silence for the whole Passion. And it is finished, they are to return again in procession to Santa Lucia. Further, the wardens and the treasurer shall be required to organise a suitable supper for all the musicians and officials and other people who have assisted in the play in any function necessary for the stage, and not for anyone else, according to a list that shall be made by the warden who remains on stage in the Colosseum, with a similar procedure to be followed in the other plays. And in the Colosseum, when the Passion is finished, two of our members dressed in their habits are to keep watch with torches on a Crucifix, in the appointed place and decorated with our *pallium*, so that groups of people can go to the Crucifix for their devotions and offer alms.¹¹

11 Palermo, Biblioteca Comunale, MS 2 Qq D 91, fols. 30v–31v; here and elsewhere all translations are mine, unless otherwise indicated. See also Anna Esposito, “Le ‘confraternite’ del Gonfalone (secoli XIV–XV),” *Le confraternite romane, esperienza religiosa, società*,

The entire confraternity went with their processional crucifix from the oratory to the Colosseum, where officials took their place in the performance space as privileged spectators, beside flagellants, actors, musicians and chorus, but access to the supper afterwards was limited strictly to the active contributors, with special suppers for the musicians. In the 1530s, the musical element became more complex: while individual characters spoke their parts, the Angels, Apostles, Marys and Pharisees, sang in chorus to especially composed music. Subsequently, the confraternity's *devozioni* were replaced by great penitential processions, and their statutes of 1565 proclaimed seamlessly that the ancient purpose of the confraternity had always been to:

go in procession on the evening of Holy Thursday, dressed according to custom in their habits, to visit the Holy Sepulchre of our Lord Jesus Christ, set up in the Pauline Chapel [in the Vatican Palace], and the church of St Peter where the Sudarium of Our Lord [the Veronica] is displayed, and the Lance with which he was pierced on the cross, and many brethren, wearing their habits, traditionally flagellate themselves, whence our Archconfraternity was called, and is still called in the present day, a confraternity of Flagellants.¹²

4 Hymn-Singing Confraternities in Florence

In Florence, the Christocentric, penitential drama of the flagellant confraternities did not gain a foothold, even though it seems impossible that the Umbrian practices were unknown. In the city of the Virgin Annunciate, the earliest confraternal dramas are found in the context of the *laudesi* or hymn-singing confraternities, dedicated to Santa Maria delle Laudi, which flourished throughout Florence from the 14th century.¹³ Although plays are absent from their *laudari*, surviving account books show that three of them, in the churches of San Felice in Piazza, Santa Maria del Carmine, and Santo Spirito—all conventual churches in the Oltrarno—devoted effort and resources to celebrating the liturgical feasts of the Annunciation, Ascension, and Pentecost

committenza artistica, (ed.) Luigi Fiorani (Ricerche per la storia religiosa di Roma, 5) (Rome: 1984), 91–136: 126.

12 *Statuti della venerabile Archiconfraternità del Confalone* (Rome: 1584), 55.

13 On Florentine religious theatre and for the most current bibliography, see Paola Ventrone, *Teatro civile e sacra rappresentazione a Firenze nel Rinascimento* (Florence: 2016); as well as her earlier monograph, *Gli araldi della commedia: teatro a Firenze nel Rinascimento* (Florence: 1993).

respectively.¹⁴ No texts survive that can be unequivocally linked to the performances, but lighting effects and fireworks, music and song, and awe-inspiring machinery that communicated between heaven and earth were probably more important than words. Of the three, the Annunciation, attributed by Vasari to Brunelleschi, is the most famous, but the Ascension is more reliably documented. The first mention of the Ascension being done in the Carmine is in Franco Sacchetti's anecdote, c.1390, of an ascent so slow that Christ is probably not there yet.¹⁵ Nevertheless, after the completion of the church in 1422, the confraternity of Santa Maria delle Laudi e di Sant'Agnese invested huge resources in the construction, on the *volte* or vaulted masonry wall that divided the nave from the choir, of Jerusalem (a *castello* representing the city gate, with the Upper Room above it), and the Mount (a rocky mountain, concealing winches), connected by ropes stretching diagonally to Heaven above the high altar, to which Christ ascended, and to Paradise directly above the *volte*, from which angels descended to comfort the apostles and Mary. The equipment, together with a *stella* or huge illumination device decorated with angels, remained in place in the church throughout the year. Civic funding was provided by allowing members to collect and retain import duties charged at the city gates for a limited period each year. With the proceeds, incremental improvements were made each year to the set and the machinery, which meant that they grew in complexity and in weight. The confraternity also made significant modifications to the fabric of the church, including a spiral staircase to allow access from their oratory to the *volte*, and to the chamber in the wall above the High Altar.

The preparation, over four to six weeks, involved all members as well as artisans of the quarter and beyond. They began by buying brooms and rat poison, and having new keys made. Ropes and pulleys were checked, illumination devices were tested, leather harnesses for angels were renewed, wigs and beards refurbished, angels wings made anew, with ostrich, peacock or chicken feathers, or sometimes just rainbow coloured paper. Singers to play the part of Christ and the Angels were recruited from the Cathedral, and, for "going on the ropes," they alone were paid, usually with coloured hose. In the last days before the *festa* women brought flowers from the countryside to decorate the church, hundreds of lamps were filled with oil, a barrel of water was hauled into the

14 See Nerida Newbiggin, *Feste d'Oltrarno: Plays in Churches in Fifteenth-Century Florence*, 2 vols (Florence: 1996), which reproduces surviving account books, descriptions, and possible texts for the three confraternities; and eadem, "Greasing the Wheels of Heaven: Recycling, Innovation and the Brunelleschi Question," *I Tatti Studies* 11 (2007): 201–241; and Ventrone, *Teatro civile*, 56–85, 367–397.

15 Franco Sacchetti, *Il trecentonovelle*, (ed.) Emilio Faccioli (Turin: 1970), Novella LXXII, 188.

roof as a safety precaution. The three production crews for Heaven, Paradise and the Choir Screen were identified by coloured beads, and access to the performance spaces was strictly controlled. Throughout the rehearsal period, those working on the *festa* were provided with generous quantities of food and wine, and a final *colazione* or supper celebrated the performance itself. In their grant application to the Commune, the *confratelli* argued that they did their play to the glory of God and the Virgin and to give delight to the city,¹⁶ but the account books suggest that the primary beneficiaries of the performance were the *confratelli* themselves.

5 Plays for St John the Baptist

Confraternities also took part in the processions of the days preceding the feast of St John the Baptist, but the manner of their contribution is less well documented. The situation becomes clearer in 1454, when the humanist Matteo Palmieri, one of the five-man committee of *festaiuoli* in charge of the feast day and responsible for reforming the procession, also prepared a detailed description.¹⁷ The procession of *edifici*—litters with grandiose superstructures on and around which *rappresentazioni* or plays were performed—recounted the story of Man's salvation, from Creation to the Last Judgement.¹⁸ Children from the four youth confraternities that had been reformed by Eugenius IV a decade earlier led the procession and took part in a *rappresentazione* of the Creation, with nine orders of Angels, the fall of Lucifer and his legions, through to the creation of Adam and Eve and their fall. The *laudesi* confraternity from the church of San Felice in Piazza was probably responsible for the procession of prophets and sibyls and the Annunciation.¹⁹ The youth confraternity of San Giorgio traditionally accompanied the Dragon, a folk element of the feast day throughout Europe; an unidentified group performed the Nativity play with Octavian and the Sibyl in which the Temple of Peace fell away to reveal the Holy Family; the

16 Newbigin, *Feste*, 2:330 (1435), 420 (1445) and 510 (1465).

17 Matteo Palmieri, *Liber de temporibus*, followed by *Annales*, (ed.) Gino Scaramella, in *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*, vol. 26, Part 1 (Città di Castello: 1906–15), 172–174.

18 Paola Ventrone, "Sulle feste di San Giovanni: Firenze 1454," *Interpres* 19 (2000): 89–101; Nerida Newbigin, "Rewriting John the Baptist: Building a History of the San Giovanni *edifici*," *Spunti e ricerche* 22 (2007): 5–27.

19 Several years earlier, Agostino da Portico had described the Annunciation as the responsibility of the Camaldolese monks; see Daniela Delcorno Branca, "Un camaldolese alla festa di S. Giovanni: la processione del Battista descritta da Agostino di Portico," *Lettere italiane* 55 (2003): 3–25: 10.

confraternity of the Magi had a separate *edificio* with another Nativity scene. The company of the Risurrezione, which met in the Armenian church of San Basilio, at Canto alle Macine, did the Harrowing of Hell and the Resurrection; and plays of the Last Judgement and of the Three Living Kings and Three Dead Kings that closed the cycle were done by men from Santa Maria dei Servi, possibly the Confraternity of the Santissima Annunziata whose oratory below the Ospedale degli Innocenti is decorated with dancing skeletons.²⁰

The surviving 15th-century confraternity account books tell us almost nothing about the organisation of the *edifici* beyond the rare record of contributions from the *festaiuoli*. From the accounts of the confraternity of the Purification we know that it received a token amount, a *limosina*, of two lire for their expenses.²¹

6 Other Outdoor Performances

The *rappresentazioni* for the feast of St John the Baptist probably had a double existence: as plays performed on and around their *edifici*, and as autonomous performances in their confraternity spaces or by their *confratelli*. That would be the case of the *Festa de' Magi*, performed at Epiphany (6 January), at three- or five-year intervals, between the 1390s and the death of Savonarola in 1498,²² and reinvented in recent times as an annual celebration with a sidelong acknowledgement of multiculturalism. The surviving descriptions indicate that the play, its route, and its symbolic thrust changed according to the resources and the inspiration of the *festaiuoli* and their patrons. Kings assembled from the festive kingdoms of Florence—India (San Tommaso in the

20 Benedetto Dei provides ambiguous identifications of the performance groups in *La cronica dall'anno 1400 all'anno 1500*, (eds.) Roberto Barducci and Anthony Molho (Florence: 1985), 68 (1459) and 92–93 (1470).

21 For example, 40 soldi from the *festaiuoli* of St John the Baptist in 1467 for their expenses, Florence, Archivio di Stato, Compagnie Religiose Soppresses da Pietro Leopoldo (hereafter CRSPL), 1654, P. XXX.30, fols. 45r and 115v.

22 Rab Hatfield, "The Compagnia de' Magi," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 33 (1970): 107–161; Richard C. Trexler, "The Magi Enter Florence: The Ubriachi of Florence and Venice," *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History* n.s. 1 (1978): 127–218. The earliest of the *Magi* plays (in *Nuovo corpus di sacre rappresentazioni fiorentine del Quattrocento*, (ed.) Nerida Newbigin (Bologna: 1983), 183–203), and the surviving *San Bartolomeo* text (see Cesare Molinari, "La Rappresentazione di San Bartolomeo," *Annali della Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa: Lettere, Storia e Filosofia*, ser. 2, 29 (1960): 262–283) are exceptional in their metrical form, the *ballata maggiore*. The *Magi* play, like the cult of the Magi, appears to have arrived from Lombardy in the 14th century.

Mercato Vecchio), Ermenia (the Armenian church of San Basilio) and Arabia (Sant'Ambrogio in the Città Rossa)—and followed the star in procession to Jerusalem and Bethlehem, before being advised by the Angel to depart by another route. Although the confraternity of the Magi also engaged in devotional activities including the recitation of pious sermons, the *festa* seems to have been the men's principal *raison d'être*. Their oratory was in the convent of San Marco and, like the Dominican convent, they depended on Medici patronage for their success. The older Medici in turn appropriated the Magi as their particular devotion: the Magi decorated Cosimo the Elder's cell in the convent of San Marco, and the entire family was incorporated into their procession in Benozzo Gozzoli's frescoes in the private chapel of the Medici Palace. The confluence of healing power, wisdom, wealth and generosity in the conjunction of Medici and Magi suited the family's political and financial aspirations and located them in the presence of the Christ Child. The confraternity of the Magi participated willingly in the magnificent charade.

Other outdoor plays can be mentioned in passing: the *San Bartolomeo* plays of 1452, 1471, and 1489, performed in the great piazza in front of Santa Croce;²³ *San Giovanni Battista quando fu decollato*, performed outside the city gates at the place of public execution in 1451;²⁴ *San Pietro e Pagolo*, performed in front of the Palazzo della Signoria in 1477; the *Miracolo del Corpo di Cristo*,²⁵ closely associated with Santa Maria Novella, performed in 1473, 1477, and 1502; and the various plays of *San Iacopo* performed by the young men of San Iacopo tra le fosse.²⁶ All of these required significant scenic resources and the civic endorsement implied in their use of public outdoor space.

7 Youth Confraternities and Their Plays

But it is indoors, in the youth confraternities, that the major developments took place. In recent decades scholars have studied these groups in an attempt to understand how and why these plays suddenly flourished for a brief season

23 See Molinari, "La Rappresentazione di San Bartolomeo," 257–262.

24 *Nuovo corpus*, (ed.) Newbigin, 107–133.

25 "Dieci sacre rappresentazioni inedite fra Quattro e Cinquecento," (ed.) Nerida Newbigin, *Letteratura italiana antica* 10 (2009): 98–131 and 74–97.

26 For his martyrdom, see Nerida Newbigin, "La Rappresentazione di Sa' Iacopo Maggiore," *Studi e problemi di critica testuale* 46 (1993): 43–67; for four plays of his miracles, see *Sacre rappresentazioni dei secoli XIV, XV e XVI raccolte e illustrate*, (ed.) Alessandro D'Ancona (Florence: 1872), 3:415–483, and "Dieci sacre rappresentazioni," 54–73.

of three decades before gradually slipping away.²⁷ Our major source of information is the confraternity of the Purification, one of the four youth confraternities reformed by Pope Eugenius IV and the only one to have left us records from the 15th century. In their case, the performance of a play for the feast of the Purification on 2 February was written into their new constitution, approved in 1448, and the first expenses for the play are found the following year as costumes are assembled for Mary, Joseph, Simeon and Hannah, and a levathan, “il peccie di Giona” (Jonah’s fish) constructed presumably to represent Limbo where the prophets wait for the coming of the Messiah.²⁸ Other plays followed: Feo Belcari’s *Abramo*;²⁹ the *Vitello sagginato* (The fatted calf, 1449/50, 1461/2) by the *guardiano* of the confraternity, Piero di Mariano Muzi;³⁰ and plays based on legendary lives: *Sant’Alessio* (1471/2),³¹ Bernardo Pulci’s *Barlaam e Iosafat* (1474),³² and the anonymous *Sant’Eustachio* (1476/7); *San Giuliano spedaliere* (performed in Carnival 1492/3);³³ and finally the “comedy” of *Iudit* (1517/8).³⁴ The earliest dated anthology, now in the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale in Florence, Conventi Soppressi F.3.488, was copied by Lorenzo di Ser Nicolaio di Diedi who, along with his brother Giovanni, was a member of the

27 On youth confraternities generally, see Ilaria Taddei, *Fanciulli e giovani: crescere a Firenze nel Rinascimento* (Florence: 2001); on theatre and youth confraternities, Konrad Eisenbichler, “Cosa degna: il teatro nelle confraternite di fanciulli a Firenze nel Rinascimento,” in *Confraternite, chiese e società: aspetti e problemi dell’associazionismo laicale europeo in età moderna e contemporanea*, (ed.) Liana Bertoldi Lenoci (Fasano (BR): 1994), 823–836; and with current bibliography, Paola Ventrone, “Sant’Antonio e l’uso del teatro nella formazione del cittadino devoto,” *Memorie domenicane* 43 (2012): 549–567 (special issue: Antonino Pierozzo *OP* (1389–1459): *la figura e l’opera di un santo arcivescovo nell’Europa del Quattrocento*). On the single confraternities, see Konrad Eisenbichler, *The Boys of the Archangel Raphael: A Youth Confraternity in Florence, 1411–1785* (Toronto: 1998); Lorenzo Polizzotto, *Children of the Promise: The Confraternity of the Purification and the Socialization of Youths in Florence, 1427–1785* (Oxford: 2004); Anna Evangelista, “L’attività spettacolare della Compagnia di San Giovanni Evangelista nel Cinquecento,” *Medioevo e Rinascimento* 18 (2004): 299–366.

28 Nerida Newbigin, “The Word Made Flesh: The *Rappresentazioni* of Mysteries and Miracles in Fifteenth-Century Florence,” in *Christianity and the Renaissance: Image and Religious Imagination in the Quattrocento*, (eds.) Timothy Verdon and John Henderson (New York: 1990), 361–375; for a text, *Nuovo corpus*, (ed.) Newbigin, 79–106.

29 *Sacre rappresentazioni*, (ed.) D’Ancona, 1:41–59.

30 *Nuovo corpus*, (ed.) Newbigin, 29–55.

31 *Laude drammatiche*, (ed.) De Bartholomaeis, 2:255–288.

32 *Sacre rappresentazioni*, (ed.) D’Ancona, 2:141–186.

33 CRSPL, 1654, P. XXX.31, fol. 111r. Two San Giuliano plays survive, one in BNCF, Panciaticchi 25, copied in 1464/5, edited in Newbigin Nerida. “Le Rappresentazioni di San Giuliano lo Spedaliere: La festa di San Giuliano,” *Studi e problemi di critica testuale* 31 (1985): 131–166; the other in Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, C.35 sup., fols. 142r–54r.

34 “Dieci sacre rappresentazioni,” (ed.) Newbigin, 360–390.

youth confraternity of the Purification and one of the two *sagrestani* in the period May–August 1465,³⁵ in the very period in which he finished copying his anthology. Some of the plays found their way into print and became part of the canon; others were printed and then disappeared; and many others still have remained in manuscript until recent times. The anonymous plays of the *Abataccio*, the *Ortolano elemosiniere* and the *Re superbo* are among the finest and cleverest of the genre.³⁶

The repertoire is far more varied than D'Ancona's classic anthology would have us believe. The stories derive from the Old Testament—or more specifically from the Tuscan translations of single books that circulated from the 14th century; from the *Legenda aurea* or again from the Tuscan translations of individual lives; from the life of St John the Baptist modelled on the *Meditations on the Life of Christ*; from Domenico Cavalca's *Vite dei santi padri*; and from Gregory the Great's *Dialogues*. The Nativity play (possibly performed by the confraternity of the Arcangelo Raffaello) and the Purification play are linked, like the *laudesi* plays, to liturgical feast days and to the Gospel narratives, while the plays of the *Vitello sagginato* and of *Lazero ricco e Lazero povero* (or *Dives and Pauper*) derive from parables.

Named authors have been unduly privileged in modern anthologies. Feo Belcari (1411–84), an assiduous self-promoter who successfully exploited his connections with the Medici, composed an *Abramo* that is found in at least thirty-four manuscripts—more than twice as many the next most popular text, his *Annunciazione* with the Dispute of the Four Virtues; Lorenzo de' Medici composed a play for his son's confraternity that contained exquisite set pieces about the burdens of rule just as he was engaging in a final effort to establish a Medicean dynasty in Florence; the political chameleon Castellan de' Castellani (1469–c.1520) or others imitating his style closely composed over twenty plays, mostly of martyred saints, while others were experimenting in new dramatic forms.³⁷ Most interesting is the role of the Pulci family. I have recently argued that just as the men of the family were seeing their vernacular poetry through the printing press of Antonio Miscomini in the early 1480s, so too Antonia, wife

35 CRSPL, 1654, P. XXX.30, fols. 109r, 112v.

36 *Labataccio* (in manuscript: *La rappresentazione de' giudici che Iddio mostrò a un Romito per uno Angelo*) has no complete modern edition (the facsimile in *Sacre rappresentazioni toscane dei secoli XV e XVI*, (ed.) Paolo Toschi (Florence: 1969) lacks four pages); *L'ortolano elemosiniere* and *Il re superbo* in *Sacre rappresentazioni*, (ed.) Banfi, 511–536, 471–509. All three are found in BNCF, Conventi Soppressi F.3.488, copied before 1465.

37 Giovanni Ponte, *Attorno al Savonarola: Castellano Castellani e la sacra rappresentazione in Firenze tra '400 e '500* (Genova: 1969).

of Bernardo Pulci, in 1483 put together a group of plays by herself, her husband, and other unnamed authors closely associated with the youth confraternities and had them printed, on scrap runs of paper from different batches. In doing so, she claimed a literary place for these early plays as poetry and in the process became arguably the first European woman to see her works through the printing press.³⁸ The prestige of the genre was, however, short-lived. With the appearance of the illustrated editions in the 1490s, printed in smaller type and in two columns, with woodcuts of an angel and a scene illustrating the play on the title page (that made them irresistible to collectors and guaranteed their survival) the plays moved into a different cultural zone, peddled as popular devotional texts in the streets. As a deliberate marketing ploy, to make their works saleable in a wider market and with a longer shelf-life, the printer-publishers withheld both place of publication and year,³⁹ which means that these plays have existed until recently in a timeless zone, with little attempt to differentiate between plays written and performed in the 1450s and those written and published in the years immediately after the return of the Medici in 1512.

The youth confraternities performed their plays in a variety of spaces. The play of *Sant'Eustachio* (1476/7), with a lion and a wolf that devour the saint's children as they swim in a river, and ending with a full military triumph, was performed "in the garden of Lorenzo," that is, in the Medici garden between Via Cavour and Via San Gallo, next to Piazza San Marco. In 1483, the confraternity of San Giorgio used the equipment of the confraternity of Sant'Agnese to stage the play of *Rosana*, one of the persecuted brides that found favour at the end of the century.⁴⁰ In 1489, when Lorenzo de' Medici's seventeen-year-old son Piero wanted to see a Pentecost play—which could no longer be staged in the church of Santo Spirito, rebuilt to Brunelleschi's design after the fire of 1471—the equipment from the church of the Carmine was commandeered for the performance. Lorenzo de' Medici's *San Giovanni e Paulo* was performed for Carnival in February 1491 in the cloister of the Gesuati convent in Via dell'Acqua, now Via Guelfa, home of the confraternity of San Giovanni

38 Nerida Newbigin, "Antonia Pulci and the First Anthology of *sacre rappresentazioni* (1483?)." *La Bibliofilia* 118 (2016): 337–361. For the plays surely attributable to her, see Antonia Pulci, *Saints' Lives and Bible Stories for the Stage*, (ed.) Elissa B. Weaver, trans. James Wyatt Cook (Toronto: 2010).

39 For this hypothesis, see Simona Periti, "Un 'misconosciuto' incunabolo fiorentino della Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana e Zanobi della Barba," *Bibliotheca: Rivista di studi bibliografici* 1 (2002): 253–257: 254 n. 3.

40 Newbigin, *Feste d'Oltrarno*, 1:147–150.

Evangelista.⁴¹ A stage with a mountain (a recurring stage element in the plays) was constructed and the performance was delayed until the third day of Lent because the set was not ready in time. Many plays were performed “su questi poggi” (on these cliffs) which I will argue elsewhere are on the grounds of the Girolamite convent opposite the Medici Villa on the old Via Fiesolana.⁴² It is certainly the setting, if not the actual scene, of Mariano Bellandini’s *San Romolo* performed by the boys of the Evangelista. And the *frottola* that frames *Abramo e Agar* (printed after December 1516) refers to travelling up to the “fiesolani poggi” to see the play.

8 Music

Music was an important part of performance across all modes of confraternal drama, but it is difficult to be sure what kind of music was involved. The *laudesi* confraternities employed *laudesi* or *laudieri* to sing and to be choir masters, but for the plays they recruited and paid the singers who “went on the ropes” and the musicians who played the “strumenti forti” and the “strumenti dolci” or the winds and strings. Ordinary members and even children joined in with tambourines to sing as angels in heaven. In the Roman *Passione*, too, musicians were found outside the membership rolls, from the choristers who assisted the confraternity chaplains in their various dependent churches, to singers—including Ruinato, the tenor—from the Papal chapel.

In the *sacre rappresentazioni* there are frequent banquets and marriages within the plays for which musicians are summoned and a “festa e ballo” would follow. There is a clear distinction, at least until the second decade of the 16th century, between “normal” dialogue, which is spoken—*dice, risponde*—and song: *laudi*, occasionally secular songs, and sometimes standard church hymns such as the *Te Deum*, the *Pange lingua*, or the *Vieni Sancte Spiritus*. In the second decade of the 16th century a different mode of performance is briefly documented: plays of the *Risurrezione*, *Un miracolo di santa Maria Maddalena*, and *Santa Barbara*, all now attributed to Castellan de’ Castellani, in which some parts are sung and others are spoken “a parole.”⁴³ Vincenzo Borghini (1515–80)

41 Konrad Eisenbichler, “How Bartolomeo Saw a Play,” in *The Renaissance in the Streets, Schools, and Studies: Essays in Honour of Paul F. Grendler*, (eds.) Konrad Eisenbichler and Nicholas Terpstra (Toronto: 2008), 258–278.

42 Nerida Newbiggin, *Making a Play for God: The Sacre Rappresentazioni of Renaissance Florence*, in preparation.

43 All in *Sacre rappresentazioni*, (ed.) D’Ancona, 1:329–356, 1:391–425; and 2:71–92.

wrote in the 1560s that in his youth the plays were “entirely recited in song” and that the Herald—Giovambattista Dell’Ottonaio—was the first to use recitation in the *frottola* that frames the play of *Abramo e Agar* (c.1515), but Borghini’s statement is extremely problematic and has been questioned by many scholars. While there is no doubt that the art of improvising on the *viola da braccio* was widespread, the texts of the *rappresentazioni* with their rapid exchange of often complex, highly connected, and witty dialogue, were learnt by heart by the actors and do not belong to the same improvised performance genre as the *cantare*.⁴⁴

9 *Serio Ludere*: Preaching and Pleasure

Much has been published in the last decade on the preaching aspects of the plays, arguing that they were sermons enacted for the benefit of the young, as part of a process of educating adolescent males through action and instruction, and moulding them to a fit an ideal of citizenship.⁴⁵ While the Belcari’s *Abramo* and Muzi’s *Vitello sagginato* and the anonymous *Iacob ed Esau*⁴⁶ model variants of filial obedience and are clearly directed towards the performers so that acting is part of their learning experience, the moral lessons of other plays seem to be directed outwards, towards a privileged audience. Above all, the pre-Savonarolan plays preach *misericordia*, the seven acts of mercy that will be

44 For Borghini’s text in BNCF, II.X.116, fols. 44v–45v see Nerida Newbigin, “Directing the Gaze: Expository Modes in Late Medieval Italian Plays,” in *The Narrator, the Expositor, and the Prompter in European Medieval Theatre*, (ed.) Philip Butterworth (Turnhout: 2007), 69–91. For previous comments, see D’Ancona, *Origini*, 1:395, 397; Bianca Becherini, “La musica nelle ‘sacre rappresentazioni’ fiorentine,” *Rivista musicale italiana* 53 (1951): 193–241; Giulio Cattin, “La musica nelle sacre rappresentazioni fiorentine: il caso della *Rappresentazione di S. Onofrio*,” in *Esperienze dello spettacolo religioso nell’Europa del Quattrocento*, (eds.) Maria Chiabò and Federico Doglio (Rome: 1993), 131–143; Paola Ventrone, *Gli araldi della commedia*, 127–131; and on improvised performance, Luca Degl’Innocenti, “*Al suon di questa cetra*: ricerche sulla poesia orale del Rinascimento (Florence: 2016).

45 Paola Ventrone, “La sacra rappresentazione fiorentina, ovvero la predicazione in forma di teatro,” *Letteratura in forma di sermone: i rapporti tra predicazione e letteratura nei secoli XIII–XVI*, (eds.) Ginetta Auzzas, Giovanni Baffetti, and Carlo Delcorno (Florence: 2003), 255–280; Pietro Delcorno, *Lazzaro e il ricco epulone: metamorfosi di una parabola fra Quattro e Cinquecento* (Bologna: 2014); and his “‘We Have Made It for Learning.’ The Fifteenth-Century Florentine Religious Play *Lazero ricco e Lazero povero* as a Sermon in the Form of Theatre,” in *From Words to Deeds: The Effectiveness of Late Medieval Preaching*, (ed.) Maria Grazia Muzzarelli (Turnhout: 2014), 65–97.

46 BNCF, Landau Finaly 249, fols. 32r–44r.

repaid in heaven. The asceticism of the tales from the *Vite dei santi padri* seems to have resonated with Piero de' Medici, the patron of the confraternity of the Purification in the 1460s.⁴⁷ The economic premise that underpins the plays is that the pursuit of wealth—through gambling, theft, usury, or even legitimate commerce—is futile. The only worthwhile investment is in charity, which will be repaid one-hundredfold. The story is told over and over, in plays as diverse as the *Agnolo Raffaele e di Tobia*, *San Giovanni Colombini*, *Piero Teodinario*, and *Lazero ricco e Lazero povero*.⁴⁸

A second theme emerges in the last two decades of the century: the supreme value of virginity, even when steadfastness of faith that preserves it results in martyrdom. The play of *Santa Cecilia* was included among the Florentine plays copied by Tomaso Leone for the Bolognese confraternity of San Girolamo in 1482, and when a different and shorter redaction was printed by Tubini and Ghirlandi in about 1515, it carried the colophon “Recitata per la compagnia del Vangelista” (performed by the confraternity of the Evangelist).⁴⁹ The abundance of such martyrdom plays and their gruesomeness is an indication that the genre delighted a wide audience of spectators and readers for the next forty years.

If we emphasise the didactic elements of the *rappresentazione*, we should not ignore the extraordinarily sophisticated humour of misbehaving angels and devils both unrecognised (perhaps a tail or a half-concealed horn?) and in full diabolical costume, and the sheer pleasure of boisterous performance. The plays provided a wholesome alternative to the stone fights and bonfires of Carnival, and they did so by engaging the young in pleasurable activity and then providing a generous communal meal for all the participants—often an extension of the final scene of the play, as in the *Vitello sagginato*. Masi's memoir of *San Giovanni e Paulo* in 1491 mentions costumes and banquets but not the name of the play.⁵⁰

47 Amanda Lillie, “Fiesole: *Locus Amoenus* or Penitential Landscape?,” *I Tatti Studies: Essays in the Renaissance* 11 (2007): 11–55.

48 *Agnolo Raffaele e di Tobia*, in *Sacre rappresentazioni*, (ed.) D'Ancona, 1:97–128; *Piero Teodinario* and *San Giovanni Colombini*, in Rome, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale Vittorio Emanuele, Vittorio Emanuele 483, fols. 31r–42v and 95v–110r; and *Lazero ricco e Lazero povero* (c.1515), now edited in Pietro Delcorno, “La Festa di Lazero ricco e di Lazero povero: una sacra rappresentazione fiorentina sulla parabola del ricco epulone,” *Interpres* 30 (2011): 62–135.

49 Vittorio Emanuele 483, fols. 110r–34v.

50 Discussed in Eisenbichler, “How Bartolomeo Saw a Play.”

10 Changes in Taste and Social Organisation

In the 16th century, following the return of the Medici in 1512, new forms of theatre emerged. Secular performance groups emerged like the *brigata* of the Broncone, the Diamante, and the Cazzuola. They modelled their *capitoli* closely on the confraternal statutes, but where the standard Bible verse chosen to exemplify youth confraternity activities is *Declina a malo et fac bonum* [Depart from evil and do good] (Ps 36 [37]:27), the Broncone chose *Dilige<s> proximum tuum sicut te ipsum* [Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself] (Mt 19:19).⁵¹ The principal intentions were to live in unity and concord with each other and to “generously delight the city according to their abilities.”⁵² Giovambattista Dell’Ottonaio, son of Cristofano, the coppersmith who had been *guardiano* of the confraternity of San Giovanni Evangelista in 1490s and through to 1513, was a member of the *brigata* of the Cazzuola; he had himself appointed herald of the Signoria while the previous herald was still in the position and composed entertainments for them.

Sacre rappresentazioni continued to be printed throughout the 16th and 17th centuries. The Giunti publishing house in Florence made a concerted effort, with no trace of interference from the censors, to gather all the published plays into an omnibus set of three volumes (1550, 1558 and 1570), explaining in the preface that these were now the domain principally of youth confraternities and convents of nuns.⁵³ New *sacre rappresentazioni* were still being written for the youth confraternities—plays such as *Sant’Uliva* (printed 1568), that was revived by Jacques Copeau in the first *Maggio Musicale* of 1933, in a production that epitomised the Regime’s exploitation of “history”⁵⁴—but the old genre was falling into disrepute. Giovan Battista Doni (c.1593–1647) dismissed the old *rappresentazioni* as “foolish and common, based on legends or used by nuns, because these do not deserve to be counted as poetry,” but praised the new, “polished and well-wrought with poetic art and diction, like the Sant’Alessio of

51 See, for example, the *Capitoli della Compagnia della Purificazione*, BNCF, Magliabechiano VIII.1500 (11), fol. 4r; *I capitoli della compagnia del Broncone*, (ed.) Giuseppe Palagi (Florence: 1872), 9. On the new groups, see Ventrone, *Gli araldi*, 82–84.

52 *I capitoli*, 10.

53 For the prefaces see Alfredo Cioni, *Bibliografia delle sacre rappresentazioni* (Florence: 1961), 24–25. Nuns’ plays are beyond the scope of this chapter, but see Elissa B. Weaver, *Convent Theatre in Early Modern Italy: Spiritual Fun and Learning for Women* (Cambridge, UK: 2002).

54 See Fabrizio Cruciani, *Jacques Copeau e le aporie del teatro moderno* (Rome: 1971), 242–44. On Castellan de’ Castellani, see n. 37 above.

the most brilliant Monsignor Giulio Rospigliosi, performed several times and always received with universal applause."⁵⁵

The old subjects were revisited according to the tenets of classical comedy: single set, twenty-four hours, and servants to relate action that takes place off stage. And the social structures that make them possible were transformed. As Konrad Eisenbichler traces for the boys of the Archangel Raphael, the confraternities gradually evolved into amateur theatrical groups and literary academies, their membership no longer confined to impecunious youths but filled with well-established men who were able to provide and solicit sponsorship. Plays and oratorios were commissioned that required a vast investment of time and money and also different abilities, because music and singing becomes increasingly professionalised. The plays were longer, the language more academic and complex, and the action highly scripted, in antithesis to the *commedia dell'arte* that was established by the 1540s as an alternative form of entertainment throughout Italy. Giovan Maria Cecchi (1518–87) is emblematic among these authors and, with more than sixty plays to his name, by far the most prolific. His works include farces, comedies, *commedie spirituali*, *atti scenici*, and *L'Esaltazione della croce*, performed for a third and last time posthumously by the young men of the confraternity of San Giovanni Evangelista on the occasion of the marriage of the Grand Duke Ferdinando de' Medici to Christine of Lorraine in 1589. And at the same time as the growth of court culture throughout Italy favoured the concentration of theatrical investment in massively expensive court entertainments, the confraternities put their resources at the disposal of the aristocracy and enjoyed their patronage.⁵⁶

Many of these later plays were printed and an enormous number survive, catalogued but unread, in libraries throughout Italy. Another transformation takes place: the history of confraternity drama becomes a history of book-collecting. The Vatican Librarian Leone Allacci (1586–1669) formed his own collection of theatrical texts and published a checklist that was supplemented by

55 Giovan Battista Doni, *Trattati di musica*, Part 2 of *Lyra Barberina Amphichordos*, 2 vols (Florence: 1763), 2:15. Giulio Rospigliosi (the future Pope Clement IX), *Sant'Alessio*, opera in three acts, with music by Stefano Landi (1631).

56 On Giovan Maria Cecchi, see Konrad Eisenbichler, "Words, Characters, and Context: Giovan Maria Cecchi and the Language of Theatre," *Quaderni d'italianistica* 36 (2015): 91–113. On this play, see Michel Plaisance, "*L'Exaltation de la Croix*: Comédie religieuse de Giovannaria Cecchi," in *Les voies de la création théâtrale: Théâtre, histoire, modèles* (Paris: 1980); Gianni Cicali, *L'Inventio crucis nel teatro rinascimentale fiorentino: una leggenda tra spettacolo, antisemitismo e propaganda* (Florence: 2012).

other bibliophiles.⁵⁷ Electronic catalogues and digitising campaigns have now made it possible to locate and access this extraordinary printed patrimony,⁵⁸ but there is still vast scope for research on the manuscript repertoire and the confraternal context in centres beyond those discussed here and beyond the 15th and 16th century.

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57 Allacci, Leone, *Drammaturgia* [1666], revised and continued by Giovanni Cendoni and Apostolo Zeno (Venice: 1755). For a continuation, see for example Florence, Biblioteca Riccardiana, MS 2450, Anton Maria Biscioni, *Drammaturgia di Mons. Leone Allacci corretta ed accresciuta fino all'anno 1737 dal dottore Antommaria Biscioni Fiorentino*.

58 In addition to Google Books and Archive.org, see *Incunabula Short-Title Catalogue*, <<http://data.cerl.org/istc/>>, with links to digitised texts; *Edit6*, the National Census of Sixteenth-Century Italian Editions, <<http://edit6.iccu.sbn.it/>>, again, with links; and digitised *rappresentazioni* of the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, Florence, in ProQuest's *Early European Books* database.

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Faith on Stage: The Chambers of Rhetoric and Civic Religion in the Low Countries, 1400–1700

Anne-Laure Van Bruaene

1 Introduction

On 9 December 1448 the aldermen of the city of Ghent ratified the statutes of The Fountain (*de Fonteine*). “The company of art and confraternity of rhetoric that is called the company of the Fountain” presented itself as an exclusive group of male citizens who held three-weekly closed poetry contests.¹ They also occasionally performed plays in the public sphere, both in Ghent and in other towns. Honourable entertainment offered a remedy for melancholy and idleness, the statutes stated, but this medical motive was embedded in a strong religious discourse. The company’s patron was the Holy Trinity “without whose inspiration no one will come to full perfection.”² To mark their religious identity members of The Fountain on special occasions wore a habit with on its sleeve an embroidered fountain with three spouts. Every Sunday the corporation celebrated a mass for the Holy Trinity in its chapel in the parish church of St. Nicholas. In its first years the income from membership fees was to be invested in the renovation of the altar and the elaboration of the religious services. For every deceased member who had paid his dues a sung requiem mass with deacon and sub-deacon would be held.³

The statutes of the Fountain set the model for a new kind of confraternity that was highly typical for the late medieval and early modern Low Countries: the chamber of rhetoric. As Paul Trio discusses in his chapter, religious confraternities existed in this region since the high Middle Ages and became particularly numerous in the 14th and 15th centuries. With a few exceptions, most religious confraternities limited themselves to devotional activities such as

1 “Gheselscepe van der const ende broederscip van der Rethorique [...] dat men noomt ‘t gheselscip van der Fontaine.”

2 “Sonder wiens inspiratie niemen ter goeder perfectie commen sal.”

3 The statutes of The Fountain are edited by Antonin Van Elslander, “De instelbrief van de rederijkerskamer ‘De Fonteine’ te Gent (9 december 1448),” *Jaarboek De Fonteine* 6–7 (1948–49): 15–22.

the celebration of the patron saint and prayers for the dead.⁴ In contrast with Italy, only a few confraternities were involved in charity because guilds, elite families, or ecclesiastical institutions organised most social care. Guilds, such as craft and shooting guilds, had some basic characteristics in common with religious confraternities in the sense that they also maintained a chapel, venerated their patron saint, and held services for deceased members. Yet, their prime function was economic or paramilitary.⁵

From a contemporary perspective chambers of rhetoric were guilds rather than confraternities: their core business was the Art of Rhetoric, namely the exercise and performance of vernacular poetry and drama. Yet, this strict division misses the point that the chambers of rhetoric were exponents of a new lay devotion in the late medieval Low Countries. Moreover the chambers of rhetoric played an essential role in the transformation of religious thought in this region in the 15th and 16th centuries. What we now would call “literature” was in this period for many townsmen a way of expressing their religious beliefs and political convictions in poetical and theatrical forms. This chapter will discuss the origins, basic characteristics, and general history of the chambers of rhetoric between 1400 and 1700.⁶ The examination adopts a chronological approach in order to make the argument that the chambers of rhetoric were both the product of religious change and one of its agents. These corporations contributed in an important way to a civic religion particular to the Low Countries, where large cities interacted with a strong network of small towns.⁷

The concept of “civic religion” has been heavily debated in recent years. André Vauchez’s notion of a “religion civique” implies that urban governments consciously appropriated religious institutions, practices and values with the aim of giving a sacral aura to the civic community and legitimizing their own authority.⁸ In this sense the concept is applicable to many Italian city-states,

4 Paul Trio, *Volksreligie als spiegel van een stedelijke samenleving: de broederschappen te Gent in de Late Middeleeuwen* (Leuven: 1993).

5 Maarten Prak, Catharina Lis, Jan Lucassen and Hugo Soly (ed.), *Craft Guilds in the Early Modern Low Countries: Work, Power and Representation* (Aldershot: 2006); Laura Crombie, *Archery and Crossbow Guilds in Medieval Flanders, 1300–1500* (Woodbridge: 2016).

6 Anne-Laure Van Bruaene and Arjan van Dixhoorn have extensively studied the institutional characteristics of the chambers of rhetoric in the Southern and Northern Low Countries respectively. See: Anne-Laure Van Bruaene, *Om beters wille. Rederijerskamers en de stedelijke cultuur in de Zuidelijke Nederlanden (1400–1650)* (Amsterdam: 2008); Arjan van Dixhoorn, *Lustige geesten. Rederijers in de Noordelijke Nederlanden (1480–1650)* (Amsterdam: 2009).

7 Anne-Laure Van Bruaene, “A wonderfull tryumfe, for the wynnynng of a pryse’: Guilds, Ritual, Theater, and the Urban Network in the Southern Low Countries, ca. 1450–1650,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 59 (2006): 374–405.

8 *La religion civique à l’époque médiévale et moderne*, (ed.) André Vauchez (Rome: 1995).

but less so to the Low Countries, where despite the large autonomy of cities like Ghent, Bruges, and Antwerp the sovereign princes of the Burgundian-Habsburg dynasty ruled.⁹ Besides, the town councils held a much weaker grip on the many ecclesiastical institutions and religious corporations. One reason for this is the fact that until the second half of the 16th century none of the major cities of the Low Countries (with the exception of Utrecht in the Northern Netherlands) harboured an episcopal seat, with as a consequence only loose ties between the civic magistracies and the bishops.¹⁰ Another reason is that in most towns there was a relatively balanced division of power between various political and economic bodies and often a high turnover rate of political functionaries, making the programmatic elaboration of a civic ideology much more difficult.¹¹ Yet, this chapter adopts a broader definition of civic religion, referring to the appropriation of religious values and practices by wider groups of citizens and thus advocating a more bottom-up perspective.¹²

2 The 15th Century: A Site for Lay Devotion

The institution of The Fountain in Ghent around the middle of the 15th century can be seen as the result of significant changes in the devotional landscape of the Low Countries since the late 14th century. These changes need to be cast into a wider Western-European perspective of a growing involvement of laypeople—especially townsmen—in setting the parameters of religious experience.¹³ On the one hand, civic processions developed into more elaborate spectacles and, from around 1400, often integrated theatrical elements. Attracting large crowds from inside and outside the city, these processions (often dedicated to the Corpus Christi) became the defining rituals of both

9 Peter Arnade, *Realms of Ritual. Burgundian Ceremony and Civic Life in Late Medieval Ghent* (Ithaca: 1996).

10 The important episcopal city of Liège lay outside the territory of the Low Countries. On its confraternities, see D. Henry Dieterich, "Confraternities and Lay Leadership in Sixteenth-Century Liège," *Renaissance and Reformation* 25 (1989): 15–33.

11 Guido Marnef and Anne-Laure Van Bruaene, "Civic religion: Community, Identity and Religious Transformation," in *City and Society in the Low Countries, 1100–1600*, (eds.) Bruno Blondé, Marc Boone and Anne-Laure Van Bruaene (Cambridge: 2018), 128–161.

12 Pierre Monnet, "Pour en finir avec la religion civique?" *Histoire urbaine* 27 (2010): 107–120.

13 John Van Engen, "Multiple Options: The World of the Fifteenth-Century Church," *Church History* 77 (2008): 257–284.

large cities and small towns.¹⁴ On the other hand, in the larger urban centres a more exclusive devotional culture developed in which vernacular poetry was a privileged medium.¹⁵ The early history of the chambers of rhetoric is largely obscured by a lack of sources, but it is clear that this double orientation of theatre in the public sphere and poetry in a semi-private sphere lay at its origins.

Most chambers of rhetoric originated from loosely organised groups that staged *tableaux vivants* and performed passion plays during and after the annual processions in their hometowns. They also performed during Shrove Tuesday celebrations, staging burlesque plays. As compensation for their contribution to “the honour of the city” these theatre groups received gifts of wine from the town councils and this is why they regularly appear in the city accounts. Most of these groups had a short lifespan. Only a limited number acquired a more permanent character and, at some point, adopted the institutional form of a guild or confraternity with a patron saint and a dedicated altar.¹⁶ This institutionalisation happened in particular after 1440, in a period of relative political peace and fast economic growth under the rule of the Burgundian Duke Philip the Good (r. 1419–1467).¹⁷

This Golden Age of Burgundy created the conditions for international success in the domains of the arts, in particular Flemish polyphony and Early Netherlandish painting. In large cities such as Bruges, Brussels, and Ghent highly skilled artisans and artists also developed new, Dutch-language poetical forms, inspired by the French *seconde rhétorique*.¹⁸ From about the late 14th century in the French-language regions of Normandy, Picardy, Artois, Hainault, and Walloon Flanders, *pays marials* had been established. These literary confraternities had begun to organise annual poetry contests—the latter also called *pays*—in honour of the Virgin Mary (for a further discussion, see the chapter

14 B.A.M. Ramakers, *Spelen en figuren. Toneelkunst en processiecultuur in Oudenaarde tussen Middeleeuwen en Moderne Tijd* (Amsterdam: 1996); Andrew Brown, *Civic Ceremony and Religion in Medieval Bruges c.1300–1520* (Cambridge, UK: 2011).

15 J.B. Oosterman, *De gratie van het gebed. Overlevering en functie van Middelnederlandse berijmde gebeden* (Amsterdam: 1995); Herman Brinkman, *Dichten uit liefde. Literatuur in Leiden aan het einde van de Middeleeuwen* (Hilversum: 1997).

16 Van Bruaene, *Om beters wille*, 27–41. For the French-language Low Countries and Northern France, see Katell Lavéant, *Un théâtre des frontières. La culture dramatique dans les provinces du Nord au XVe et XVIe siècles* (Orléans: 2011).

17 Wim Blockmans and Walter Prevenier, *The Promised Lands. The Low Countries under Burgundian rule, 1369–1530* (Philadelphia: 1999), 141–173.

18 Dirk Coigneau, “Den Boeck’ van Brussel: een geval apart?,” *Jaarboek de Fonteyne* 49–50 (1999–2000): 31–40.

by Dylan Reid in this volume).¹⁹ The new Dutch-language companies that were instituted in the early 15th century in Bruges (The Holy Ghost), Brussels (The Book), Ghent (The Fountain), and Ypres (The Holy Ghost) bore many resemblances, but were not exclusively devoted to the Virgin Mary, combined poetry with theatre, and have to be situated socially in higher middle-class rather than elite circles.²⁰ For example, around the middle of the 15th century, the leading figure in The Fountain was Claeys vander Meersch, a master-painter who specialised in decorative painting, including the annual adornment of the canopy for the statue of Our Lady of Tournai, which a delegation from Ghent carried in the episcopal city's major procession.²¹

The breakthrough of the model of the chambers of rhetoric happened in the 1470s and 1480s, first in Flanders and Brabant, subsequently in Holland, Zeeland, and Hainault. Around that time the more loosely organised theatre groups that performed in the context of civic processions either disappeared or institutionalised as confraternities. Many new chambers of rhetoric were established, which combined dramatic performances with training in poetry. Two elements were key to this evolution. On the one hand, city magistracies recognised the benefits of having one or more companies within their walls that regularly performed plays of both a religious and a profane nature for the local population. Increasingly town councils ratified statutes and offered annual subsidies, rehearsal space, or privileges such as exemption from duty in the military guilds. On the other hand, an internal dynamic led to many contacts and cross-fertilisations. Many competitions were organised between corporations from the same city, but also between chambers of rhetoric of different towns and even different principalities. Drama contests were held to add to the attraction of civic processions and meetings of crossbow or hand-bow guilds. Increasingly, poetry contests also gained an interurban character. At the end of the 15th century, the first *landjuwelen* (literally "jewels of the land

19 Gérard Gros, *Le poète, la Vierge et le prince du Puy. Etude sur les Puyx marials de la France du Nord du XIV^e siècle à la Renaissance* (Paris: 1992); Dylan Reid, "Moderate Devotion, Mediocre Poetry and Magnificent Food. The Confraternity of the Immaculate Conception of Rouen," *Confraternitas* 7 (1996): 3–10; Dylan Reid, "Patrons of Poetry: Rouen's Confraternity of the Immaculate Conception of Our Lady," in *The Reach of the Republic of Letters. Literary and Learned Societies in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, (eds.) Arjan van Dixhoorn and Susie Speakman Sutch (Leiden: 2008), 1:33–78.

20 Van Bruaene, *Om beters wille*, 42–50.

21 Anne-Laure Van Bruaene, "'Abel in eenighe const.' Claeys vander Meersch, meester-schilder, en de jonge Fonteyne (1448–1476)," *Jaarboek de Fonteyne* 49–50 (1999–2000): 77–94.

[of Brabant]”), large-scale autonomous competitions of the chambers of rhetoric, were held in Brabant.²²

One of the major events was the *landjuweel* held in Antwerp in 1496, in which twenty-eight chambers of rhetoric from all around the Low Countries participated (thirteen companies from Brabant, thirteen from Flanders, one from Holland, and one from Zeeland). The highest prize was awarded to the religious play that best instructed the audience on what was the greatest mystery or grace that God had ordained for the salvation of mankind. The play texts are no longer extant, but the themes of all plays were in line with the sensibilities of late medieval devotion, dramatizing the incarnation, the wounds, the death and the resurrection of Christ, the sacrament of the altar, and charity.²³ The invitation for the *landjuweel* made it clear that the solution to the central question needed to be proven in a three-fold manner: in a “natural” way by making reference to the natural world God had created, in a “scriptural” way by reverting to the authority of Scripture and the Church Fathers, and in a “figurative” way by the use of images, metaphors, and allegories. The preference for this argumentative method borrowed from the *artes praedicandi* makes it clear that high value was placed on the rational thought process leading to a doctrinal point. More generally, Nelleke Moser has argued that, in order to instruct their audiences, lay rhetoricians cultivated a self-image as popular preachers who were inflamed by the Holy Spirit.²⁴ This attitude of *docta ignorantia* implied a profound knowledge of religious texts, particularly vernacular Bible texts.²⁵

In this period the relationship between the clergy and the educated laity who chose active membership in a chamber of rhetoric seems to have been generally good. In a few cases a cleric assumed a leadership role. In 1462 the schoolmaster and priest Jan van Putthem founded a chamber of rhetoric in the small Flemish town of Tielt.²⁶ In the 1490s Hendrik Maes (d. 1512), canon of the collegiate church of St. Rumbold, was acting as playwright for the

22 Van Bruaene, *Om beters wille*, 53–76; Van Dixhoorn, *Lustige geesten*, 35–40. On the *landjuweel* tradition, see Jeroen Vandommele, *Als in een spiegel. Vrede, kennis en gemeenschap op het Antwerpse landjuweel van 1561* (Hilversum: 2011), 27–30.

23 Gary K. Waite, *Reformers on stage. Popular Drama and Religious Propaganda in the Low Countries of Charles V, 1515–1556* (Toronto: 2000), 42–43.

24 Nelleke Moser, *De strijd voor rhetorica. Poëtica en positie van rederijkers in Vlaanderen, Brabant, Zeeland en Holland tussen 1450 en 1620* (Amsterdam: 2001), 132–146.

25 Sabrina Corbellini and Margriet Hoogvliet, “Artisans and Religious Reading in Late Medieval Italy and Northern France (ca. 1400–ca. 1520),” *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 43 (2013): 521–544.

26 Alphonse De Vlaminck, “Jaerboeken der Thieltsche Rhetorijkkamer,” *Vaderlandsch Museum* 5 (1863): 227–228.

principal chamber of rhetoric of the court city of Mechelen (Malines).²⁷ More often, clergymen were asked as advisers or judges for competitions. In 1457 the Dominicans of Bruges were asked to suggest a suitable theme for a contest in the nearby town of Oudenburg.²⁸ The first *landjuweel* in Leuven in 1478 was judged by a number of the town's university professors.²⁹ In 1493 in the Flemish town of Wervik plays were performed before a jury consisting of an Augustine, a Carmelite, and a Dominican.³⁰ Conversely, members of the clergy also saw the devotional value of the literary products of the chambers of rhetoric or of individual rhetoricians. After clerical approval, copies of the versed, Dutch-language *Praise of the Holy Sacrament* (c.1456) composed by Anthonis de Roovere (c.1430–1482), a master mason and leading rhetorician of Bruges, were hung in several churches in Flanders to stimulate lay devotion for the Corpus Christi.³¹ At a competition in Brussels in 1512 poems in praise of the Immaculate Conception were recited before a clerical jury. Afterwards, the texts were transferred to the church of St. George in Antwerp where each week one text was put on display so that all devotees could read them.³²

In the late 15th century some chambers of rhetoric became more actively involved in the promotion of a new devotion, namely the cult of Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows. This devotion was devised by clerical members of the Burgundian-Habsburg court as an answer to the spiritual distress of the population in the wake of a series of civil wars. The underlying intention was to encourage attachment to the ruling dynasty and its ideology of territorial unity. The devotion was propagated via masses, sermons, processions, miracles, and the printing press. In many places the chambers of rhetoric staged plays on the Seven Sorrows to attract even larger crowds. Hendrik Maes, the canon and playwright from Mechelen, was the author of one such play that was staged publicly in 1494 before a mixed audience of court members (including Duke Philip the Fair) and townsmen. Most importantly, a prayer community crafted on the model of the Rosary confraternity was instituted that was open, without

27 Eugene Van Autenboer, "Maes, Hendrik, rederijker," in *Nationaal Biografisch Woordenboek* (Brussels: 1966), 2:498–499.

28 Eusèbe Feys and Désiré Van de Castele, *Histoire d'Oudembourg, accompagnée de pièces justificatives comprenant le cartulaire de la ville et de nombreux extraits des comptes communaux* (Bruges: 1873–1878), 2:430–431.

29 F.J. Raymaekers, "Chambre de Rhétorique la Fontaine, à Gand," *Messenger des sciences historiques* (1863): 496–498.

30 Van Bruaene, *Om beters wille*, 217.

31 Moser, *De strijd voor rhetorica*, 173.

32 M.E. Kronenberg, "Gemengde berichten uit de kringen van theologen en rederijkers te Antwerpen, Brussel en Gent (begin 16^e eeuw)," in *Prosper Verheyden gehuldigd ter gelegenheid van zijn zeventigsten verjaardag 23 Oct. 1943* (Antwerp: 1943), 238.

any financial dues, to everyone who was prepared to do simple, weekly meditative exercises. A number of local chapters of this confraternity of the Seven Sorrows were established by rhetoricians in Antwerp, Brussels, and Mechelen. In Brussels, in the early 16th century, the chambers of rhetoric organised an annual procession with the aim of instructing the local population in rhetorical verses on the nature and meaning of the Seven Sorrows.³³

Membership in a chamber of rhetoric offered the opportunity to train an active and creative religious habitus by writing verse, discussing religious texts, staging morality plays, or performing in civic processions. In early corporations such as The Fountain in Ghent this religious activism seems to have been shared by a small group of committed rhetoricians. The Holy Ghost in Bruges, which can be traced back to 1428, counted fourteen men who, according to a later narrative, were inspired by the Holy Spirit on Maundy Thursday to institute a literary confraternity.³⁴ Yet, the wide proliferation of the model of the chamber of rhetoric at the end of the 15th century led to a membership at two speeds. In many chambers of rhetoric the burden of the financial, devotional, and rhetorical duties lay on the shoulders of the board members. Another solution was to give members the choice between a strong commitment as companion (*gezel*) or a looser engagement as brother (*broeder*).³⁵ In 1494 the chamber of rhetoric of The Hague split in a large religious confraternity and a smaller literary company of 41 committed men.³⁶ This suggests that many members of a chamber of rhetoric never wrote any verse nor acted in a play, but only had to pay moderate financial dues and attend a limited number of religious services such as the annual feast in honour of the patron saint. As a result, for many citizens membership in a chamber of rhetoric did not differ much from membership in a traditional religious confraternity. This held

33 Susie Speakman Sutch and Anne-Laure Van Bruaene, "The Seven Sorrows of the Virgin Mary. Devotional Communication and Politics in the Burgundian-Habsburg Low Countries, c.1490–1520," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 61 (2010): 252–278; *The Seven Sorrows Confraternity of Brussels. Drama, Ceremony, and Art Patronage (16th–17th centuries)*, (ed.) Emily S. Thelen (Turnhout: 2015).

34 Laurence Derycke and Anne-Laure Van Bruaene, "Sociale en literaire dynamiek in het vroeg vijftiende-eeuwse Brugge: de oprichting van de rederijkerskamer De Heilige Geest ca. 1428," in *Stad van koopmanschap en vrede. Literatuur in Brugge tussen Middeleeuwen en Rederijkerstijd*, (ed.) J.B. Oosterman (Leuven: 2005), 59–96.

35 Van Bruaene, *Om beters wille*, 76–81.

36 Serge ter Braake and Arjan van Dixhoorn, "Engagement en ambitie. De Haagse rederijkerskamer 'Met Ghenuchten' en de ontwikkeling van de burgerlijke samenleving in Holland rond 1500," *Jaarboek voor Middeleeuwse Geschiedenis* 9 (2006): 250–290.

particularly true for women, who were allowed to register in some chambers of rhetoric, but only in this limited capacity.³⁷

Thanks to the oldest extant matriculation book, we can take a closer look at the membership of In the Honour of Mary, a chamber of rhetoric in Ghent that was formally acknowledged by the city council in 1478. Between 1478 and 1484, 285 members registered. Although it is impossible to do an exact reconstruction, it is evident that only a small number of them were active members. Women represented 10% of the membership, while in most traditional religious confraternities in the same city there was a gender balance.³⁸ About half of the female members of In the Honour of Mary were married to a male member, suggesting that, aside from family ties, there was no real incentive for women to enrol in a chamber of rhetoric. A little less than 10% of the membership was made up of clerics (both male and female), but it is unlikely that they played an active role either. The male lay members were overwhelmingly recruited from among skilled guild masters, as confirmed by the more scattered data for other chambers of rhetoric.³⁹ Most significantly, in the case of In the Honour of Mary there was strong local recruitment. Most members lived in the parish of St. James, in whose church the company maintained a chapel. Of course this is partly explained by the fact that In the Honour of Mary was already the fourth chamber of rhetoric in Ghent. The other three corporations had their chapel in other parish churches and probably also recruited mainly in their own parish.⁴⁰

3 The 16th Century: A Forum for Religious Debate

During the 15th century, and especially after 1470, the chambers of rhetoric proliferated in the Low Countries. In 1500 about 100 such corporations were active. The majority were located in the Southern Netherlands, in particular in Flanders and Brabant where the largest cities (Ghent, Bruges, Brussels, and Antwerp) were situated amidst a dense network of small towns. At that time, only 15% of the chambers of rhetoric were based in the Northern Netherlands, in the medium-sized towns of Holland and Zeeland. During the first half of the 16th century the success continued. In 1566, on the eve of the Dutch

37 Anne-Laure Van Bruaene, "Brotherhood and Sisterhood in the Chambers of Rhetoric in the Southern Low Countries," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 36 (2005): 11–35.

38 Trio, *Volksreligie als spiegel*, 220–221.

39 Th.C.J. van der Heijden, "Aanzet tot een sociale stratificatie van de rederijders in het gewest Holland," *Jaarboek de Fonteyne* 51–52 (2001–2002): 203–221.

40 Van Bruaene, *Om beters wille*, 82–85.

Revolt, about 250 chambers of rhetoric existed. Flanders and Brabant still dominated in numbers, but now—in accordance with their growing economic importance—the share of the Northern Netherlands had risen to a little less than 30%. Every town in the Low Countries now harboured at least one chamber of rhetoric; larger towns often had two or three.⁴¹

Another remarkable evolution was the founding of chambers of rhetoric in the countryside. This was particularly the case in the county of Flanders, where in 1566 almost 40% of the chambers of rhetoric was situated in a village. The reasons are complex: the combined economic success of agricultural production, rural textile industries and emerging rural markets had led to the appropriation of urban cultural practices. This was exemplified in a strong network of both primary and Latin schools.⁴² In some parts of rural Flanders up to 80% of the tenant farmers was literate, which in a European perspective was an exceptionally high number. We have, however, only scarce information on the composition of the membership of the rural chambers of rhetoric. Well-to-do farmers, local shopkeepers, and craftsmen probably represented the majority of the members, but clerics and local functionaries often took a leading role.⁴³ An exemplary case is that of Jan van Mussem, a priest, chaplain and Latin schoolmaster, who in the 1540s was the leading rhetorician of the company in the Flemish village of Wormhout (now in Northern France).⁴⁴ In a similar vein in the village of Kapelle in Zeeland a chamber of rhetoric had been instituted in 1508 by the local lord, the local schoolmaster, and a canon.⁴⁵

The rural chambers of rhetoric were firmly integrated in regional networks. For example, in the Flemish seaport town of Nieuwpoort, from 1490 to 1560 annually a considerable number of both urban and rural chambers from the surrounding region participated in a drama contest following the Corpus Christi procession.⁴⁶ In the same period, the most prestigious chambers of rhetoric of the major Flemish cities, namely The Fountain in Ghent, The Holy Ghost in

41 These numbers are based on the repertory of chambers of rhetoric compiled by Van Bruaene and Van Dixhoorn (online available at <http://www.dbnl.org/organisaties/rederijkerskamers/>).

42 Johan Decavele, "Het culturele en intellectuele netwerk: middeleeuwen en 16^{de} eeuw," in *Het stedelijk netwerk in België in historisch perspectief (1350–1850). Een statistische en dynamische benadering. Handelingen van het 15^{de} Internationaal Colloquium Spa, 4–6 sept. 1990* (Brussels: 1992), 365–384.

43 Van Bruaene, *Om beters wille*, 101–109.

44 Van Bruaene, *Om beters wille*, 106.

45 Arjan van Dixhoorn, "Rederijkers in een Zeeuws dorp. Oprichting en organisatie van de rederijkerskamer De Wijngaardranken te Kapelle in de eerste helft van de zestiende eeuw," *Zeeland* 10.2 (2001): 57–64.

46 Van Bruaene, *Om beters wille*, 104–105.

Bruges, and Alpha et Omega in Ypres, claimed authority over the corporations from smaller towns and villages by semi-officially “baptizing” them and allowing them to add a winged dove—as a sign for the Holy Spirit—to their emblem.⁴⁷ These emblems from village chambers often depicted elaborate religious imagery, like the feast of Pentecost (The Lovers of Solace of Beveren-aan-de-Yzer) or the Last Supper (The Communicants of Wormhout).⁴⁸ All this suggests that village chambers fully participated in a civic religion particular to the Low Countries that drew its meaning from the open exchange of values, practices, and conceptions between corporations and communities.

The success and wide proliferation of the chambers of rhetoric in the first half of the 16th century stood in sharp contrast with the fate of traditional religious confraternities. Although general data are lacking, several case studies have suggested that after 1520 membership numbers in traditional confraternities seriously dropped and almost no new confraternities were established.⁴⁹ Many ordinary laymen and laywomen no longer put their trust in the traditional means to attain God’s grace, such as the intercession of saints or prayers for the deceased. This has been explained by the rapid and wide reception of Reformation thought in the Low Countries. Lutheran writings were disseminated via the Antwerp market as early as 1518. In the following years Lutheran, but also broader evangelical ideas, were intensively discussed in educated circles of priests, schoolmasters, and highly skilled artisans, precisely the milieu from which most rhetoricians were recruited.⁵⁰

The chambers of rhetoric offered the opportunity to express devotion in another, more active and creative, manner.⁵¹ Between 1520 and 1570 on average three competitions a year were organised between corporations from different towns or villages in the Low Countries, both public theatre festivals and closed poetry contests. In the politically tense late 1540s and early 1560s this number rose to six contests a year.⁵² We often have very little information on

47 Van Bruaene, *Om beters wille*, 96–101.

48 Edmond Vander Straeten, *Le théâtre villageois en Flandre* (Brussels: 1874–1880), 2:47; J.L.A. Diegerick, “Notes sur les chambres de Rhétorique de la Flandre maritime (1517 à 1551),” *Annales du Comité Flamand de France* 5 (1858–1859): 149.

49 Koen Goudriaan, “Het einde van de Middeleeuwen ontdekt?,” *Madoc* 8.2 (1994): 66–75.

50 See the many examples in Johan Decavele, *De dageraad van de Reformatie in Vlaanderen* (Brussels: 1975); Guido Marnef, *Antwerp in the Age of Reformation. Underground Protestantism in a Commercial Metropolis, 1550–1577* (Baltimore: 1996).

51 Anne-Laure Van Bruaene, “*In Principio Erat Verbum*. Drama, Devotion, Reformation and Urban Association in the Low Countries,” in *Early Modern Confraternities in Europe and the Americas. International and Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, (eds.) Christopher Black and Pamela Gravestock (Aldershot: 2006), 64–80.

52 Based on the data of Van Bruaene and Van Dixhoorn, see footnote 6.

the themes and actual plays or poems, but there can no doubt that religious debate was at the heart of these competitions.⁵³ The case of the infamous theatre contest in Ghent in 1539 well illustrates the issues at stake. The competition's central question advanced the general religious theme of what was the dying man's greatest consolation. While this question was borrowed from the late medieval *ars moriendi*, the nineteen allegorical plays (staged by chambers of rhetoric from Flanders and Brabant) varied widely in their treatment of the subject.⁵⁴ Scholars have heavily debated the exact orientation of each of these plays and have labelled them from traditional to reformed Catholic, from spiritualistic to Lutheran.⁵⁵ There is a consensus, however, that the morality plays attest of their authors' profound knowledge of vernacular Bible texts. They also demonstrate both the ability and need of laymen to create their own religious path and adopt an eclectic stance towards confessional dogma.⁵⁶

The central authorities were less nuanced in their judgement. In fact, they were seriously displeased about what they considered as a collection of Lutheran plays. The printed edition of the plays of 1539 was mentioned in an imperial ordinance on forbidden books issued in 1540 and appeared in the indexes of Leuven (Louvain), Rome, Portugal, Spain, and Antwerp. The ordinance of 1540 also ordered searches in the meeting places of the chambers of rhetoric and explicitly forbade the performance of suspect plays and the naming of the Scriptures or religious authors in plays. Yet, in the following years, these measures were softened by less rigorous local ordinances.⁵⁷ A general edict issued in 1560 by King Philip II (r. 1555–1598) on the subject of theatre, poetry, and song remained relatively mild towards the public performance of religious plays and *tableaux vivants*, imposing only pre-censorship. In most places local authorities continued to lend their support to the chambers of rhetoric until the religious troubles of 1566.⁵⁸

While the chambers of rhetoric remained important parts of the civic body, many individual rhetoricians were either mildly or heavily persecuted for a

53 Waite, *Reformers on Stage*, 202–208.

54 *De Gentse spelen van 1539*, (eds.) B.H. Ern  and L.M. van Dis, 2 vols (The Hague: 1982).

55 Waite, *Reformers on Stage*, 147–157.

56 B.A.M. Ramakers, "Eloquent Presence: Verbal and Visual Discourse in the Ghent Plays of 1539," in *The Authority of the Word: Reflecting on Image and Text in Northern Europe, 1400–1700*, (eds.) Celeste Brusati, Karl Enenkel and Walter Melion (Leiden: 2011), 217–261.

57 Anne-Laure Van Bruaene, "Printing Plays. The Publication of the Ghent Plays of 1539 and the Reaction of the Authorities," *Dutch Crossing* 24 (2000): 265–284.

58 Anne-Laure Van Bruaene, "'Of the King's Edict I do You no Command': Vernacular Literary Networks and the Reformation in the Low Countries," *Archiv f r Reformationsgeschichte* 99 (2008): 229–255.

wide variety of Protestant beliefs. When in 1535 an Anabaptist plot to overtake Amsterdam failed, a number of rhetoricians were interrogated.⁵⁹ Jan van Mussem, the priest and schoolmaster from Wormhout, was suspected of writing and staging a heterodox play.⁶⁰ After a high-profile trial in Antwerp in 1547 Peter Schuddematte, a schoolmaster who first in Oudenaarde and subsequently in Antwerp had caused a stir with his anticlerical plays, poetry and other writings, was executed. The deliberative body of the Antwerp *Brede Raad* agreed to hand him over only on the condition that the parents of his pupils and his fellow-rhetoricians be left unbothered.⁶¹ In 1558 in the same city Frans Fraet, a prolific printer of Lutheran works who had also authored Lutheran plays and poetry, was beheaded.⁶² In the wake of the open Calvinist hedge preachings and the wave of iconoclasm in 1566, a considerable number of rhetoricians came under suspicion. Two spectacular cases are those of Ambrosius van Molle (d. 1568) and Jeronimus vander Voort (c.1535–c.1597), the playwrights of the two chambers of rhetoric in the Brabantine town of Lier. They were both condemned to death, but Vander Voort managed to escape.⁶³

On the other side of the spectrum stood a number of prominent Catholic rhetoricians. The most vocal Catholic rhetorician from the 16th century was a woman, the Antwerp schoolmistress Anna Bijns (1493–1575). There has been some debate on whether she was formally attached to a chamber of rhetoric or not. Her most fervent supporters were Franciscans, who encouraged her to publish her works. In any case, she used the poetical forms (*refreinen*) of the rhetoricians and was highly appreciated for her eloquent attacks on Martin Luther.⁶⁴ Another respected Catholic voice in the first half of the 16th century was Mathijs de Castelein (c.1485–1550), who dominated the literary scene in the Flemish town of Oudenaarde. De Castelein was a priest, chaplain and notary who acted as the playwright of both chambers of rhetoric in town and became famous for his posthumously published *Art of Rhetoric* (*De Const van Rhetoriken*, first published in 1555). He supervised the dramatic representations in

59 Waite, *Reformers on Stage*, 79–88; Van Dixhoorn, *Lustige geesten*, 272.

60 Decavele, *De dageraad van de Reformatie*, 1:219.

61 Victoria Christman, *Pragmatic Toleration. The Politics of Religious Heterodoxy in Early Reformation Antwerp, 1515–1555* (Rochester: 2015), 98–103.

62 Christman, *Pragmatic Toleration*, 103–106; Paul Valkema Blouw, “The Van Oldenborch and Vanden Merberghe pseudonyms or Why Frans Fraet had to die,” *Quaerendo* 22 (1992): 165–190 and 245–272.

63 Louis Van Boeckel, “Een zestiende-eeuwsche Liersche rederijker, Ambrosius van Molle,” *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis en Folklore* 4 (1941): 83–136; Dirk Coigneau, “De Goudbloem en haar factor Jeronimus van der Voort,” *Jaarboek de Fontaine* 35–36 (1985–1986): 45–80.

64 Herman Pleij, *Anna Bijns, van Antwerpen* (Amsterdam: 2011).

the annual Corpus Christi procession, which attracted crowds from far beyond Oudenaarde.⁶⁵ A final example is Marcus van Vaernewijck (1518–1569), who was for some time playwright of *In the Honour of Mary* in Ghent. Vaernewijck was a painter and a prolific writer, who is most renowned for his unpublished journal of the religious upheavals in Ghent in 1566–1568. In his insightful account he condemns the beliefs of the Reform-minded, but also seeks to explain their acts.⁶⁶

In 1557 Marcus van Vaernewijck presented his financially troubled chamber of rhetoric with an annual rent, on the condition that he never would have to perform any board duties anymore. The accounts and matriculation book of *In the Honour of Mary* offer us an unusual insight in the workings of an average chamber of rhetoric in the second half of the 16th century. The corporation was in this period completely oriented towards a local sociability and a close interaction with Ghent's other three chambers of rhetoric. About a quarter of the general membership performed board duties and in this capacity actively participated in regular masses, the annual patron feasts and the Corpus Christi procession. These religious events went hand in hand with banquets and the staging of plays or the reciting of verses. Invitations to contests in other towns were kindly rejected. In the 1560s a few prominent members caused scandal because of their performance of anticlerical poetry and songs in the public sphere, but in general *In the Honour of Mary* kept a predominantly Catholic profile. Notwithstanding, as in many other places in the Low Countries, after the iconoclastic destructions in 1566 the chambers of rhetoric in Ghent lost their annual subventions. During Ghent's short Calvinist regime (1577–1584) efforts were made to claim a new public role, but because of financial distress and an ever-decreasing membership this proved to be a difficult task.⁶⁷

The case of Ghent contrasts with that of another well-documented city, namely Brussels. Matriculation books are available for two of Brussels' three chambers of rhetoric, *The Book* and *The Cornflower*. First of all, there were significant differences in the social profile of the membership. Most rhetoricians in both Ghent and Brussels were guild masters, yet in the latter city they were overwhelmingly recruited from the thriving luxury industries. The *Cornflower*

65 S.A.P.J.H. Iansen, *Verkenningen in Matthijs Casteleins Const van rhetoriken* (Assen: 1971); B.A.M. Ramakers, "Between Aea and Golgotha. The Education and Scholarship of Matthijs De Castelein (c.1485–1550)," in *Education and Learning in the Netherlands, 1400–1600. Essays in Honour of Hilde de Ridder-Symoens*, (eds.) Koen Goudriaan, J.J. van Moolenbroek and Ad Tervoort (Leiden: 2004), 179–199.

66 Koen Lamont, *Het wereldbeeld van een zestiende-eeuwse Gentenaar. Marcus van Vaernewijck: een ideeën- en mentaliteitshistorische studie op basis van zijn kroniek, Van die beroerliche tijden* (Ghent: 2005).

67 Van Bruaene, *Om beters wille*, 149–171.

was dominated by highly skilled and well-to-do tapestry weavers. The Brussels companies also displayed a much larger openness towards the wider interregional network of chambers of rhetoric: they often participated in competitions and organised successful poetry and theatre contests. There is enough evidence to suggest that these literary contests offered a forum for debate on controversial religious issues. The Book attended the Ghent contest in 1539 with a play that has been labelled Lutheran by most scholars.⁶⁸ In the 1520s quite a few members of The Cornflower already moved in Lutheran circles.⁶⁹ From the late 1550s onwards a growing number of leading members switched to Calvinism, although others stayed involved in the organisation of the local Our Lady procession. Only during the Calvinist regime in Brussels (1577–1585) the chambers of rhetoric were effectively engaged for local confessional propaganda. As was the case in Ghent, in these times of civil war and religious radicalism the chambers of rhetoric experienced a decreasing membership.⁷⁰

4 The 17th Century: A Venue for Literary Sociability

The Dutch Revolt (1568–1648) had a major impact on the political and religious history of the Low Countries. Although the centre of gravity of the opposition originally lay in the main urban centres—Antwerp, Brussels, and Ghent—the southern territories would fairly quickly return under Habsburg authority. After the Fall of Antwerp in 1585 large numbers of inhabitants of the Southern Netherlands left their hometowns for a combination of economic and religious reasons. Many migrated to the emerging cities in the North, such as Amsterdam and Leiden. Partly due to this emigration of Protestants and partly because of the efforts of religious orders such as the Jesuits, the political restoration of the Habsburg Netherlands went hand in hand with a remarkably quick Catholic revival. Meanwhile, the northern territories had managed to regroup as the Dutch Republic and continue the war against Spain. Although a large part of the population in the Northern Netherlands remained Catholic, Calvinism gained the status of public religion. There were great differences between regions and cities, but in Holland and in particular in Amsterdam, a relative sort of religious tolerance was practiced.⁷¹

68 Waite, *Reformers on Stage*, 150.

69 Remco Sleiderink, “De schandaleuze spelen van 1559 en de leden van De Corenbloem. Het socioprofessionele, literaire en religieuze profiel van de Brusselse rederijderskamer,” *Belgisch Tijdschrift voor Filologie en Geschiedenis* 92 (2014): 847–875.

70 Van Bruaene, “Of the King’s Edict I do You no Command,” 233–253.

71 A number of recent syntheses include Benjamin J. Kaplan, *Divided by Faith. Religious Conflict and the Practice of Toleration in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, MA: 2007); Peter

The outbreak of the Dutch Revolt occasioned an important shift in the history of the chambers of rhetoric. Particularly after the Fall of Antwerp in 1585 many companies in the Habsburg Netherlands ceased their activities because of military unrest and the repressive war measures taken by the central authorities.⁷² Meanwhile, in the 1590s emigrant rhetoricians, often with an artistic or intellectual background, instituted “Flemish” or “Brabantine” chambers in the Dutch Republic, in booming cities such as Amsterdam, Gouda, Haarlem, and Leiden.⁷³ The Twelve Year’s Truce (1609–1621) between the Dutch Republic and Spain brought temporary peace, which gave civic culture a new stimulus: old chambers of rhetoric in the South resumed their activities, while many new corporations were established in both North and South, especially in villages.⁷⁴ By the end of the Truce, both regions matched each other in numbers: about 100 chambers of rhetoric were active in the Habsburg Netherlands compared to about 90 in the Dutch Republic. In this short period of peace many public contests were held, in some cases—like the grand-scale festival in Mechelen in 1620—with participants from both sides of the new border.⁷⁵

In the new cultural context of the Dutch Republic the practices of the chambers of rhetoric underwent significant changes. Civic processions and the celebration of masses were banned; Catholic traditions such as devotion to patron saints disappeared more gradually.⁷⁶ Reformed ministers frequently agitated against the activities of the chambers of rhetoric, branding theatre as unbiblical. Yet, the now secularised guilds quickly substituted charity for Catholic devotion. *Caritas* now became a central motive for their activities. With the support of civic authorities the chambers of rhetoric organised public lotteries or demanded entry fees for indoor theatre performances, in order

Arnade, *Beggars, Iconoclasts and Civic Patriots. The Political Culture of the Dutch Revolt* (Ithaca: 2008); Charles H. Parker, *Faith on the Margins. Catholics and Catholicism in the Dutch Golden Age* (Cambridge, UK: 2008); Judith Pollmann, *Catholic Identity and the Revolt of the Netherlands, 1520–1635* (Oxford: 2011); Geert H. Janssen, *The Dutch Revolt and Catholic Exile in Reformation Europe* (Cambridge, UK: 2014).

72 Van Bruaene, *Om beters wille*, 174–177.

73 J.G.C.A. Briels, “Reyn genuecht: Zuidnederlandse kamers van rhetorica in Noordnederland 1585–1630,” *Bijdragen tot de Geschiedenis* 57 (1974): 3–89.

74 Van Bruaene, *Om beters wille*, 177–183; Van Dixhoorn, *Lustige geesten*, 47–48.

75 Based on the data of Van Bruaene and Van Dixhoorn. On the competition in Mechelen see Marc Van Vaeck, “De Schadt-Kiste der filosofen ende poeten’ (Mechelen 1621): een blazoenfeest aan de vooravond van het einde van het Bestand,” *De Zeventiende Eeuw* 8 (1992): 75–83.

76 Benjamin J. Kaplan, “A clash of values: the survival of Utrecht’s confraternities after the Reformation and the debate over their dissolution,” *De Zeventiende Eeuw* 16 (2000): 100–117.

to raise funds for the building of orphanages and hospitals. Meanwhile, a considerable number of rhetoricians were heavily engaged in the debates about the political and religious organisation of the young state. Yet, although in the 17th-century Dutch Republic the chambers of rhetoric remained an important part of the civic body, the double impact of Calvinist censorship and a growing commercialisation of theatre gradually reduced their public role. Around 1650 the rhetoricians no longer performed on the streets.⁷⁷

In the Habsburg Netherlands the Catholic Reformation also seriously altered civic culture. As elsewhere in Counter-Reformation Europe, the clerical grip on lay devotional practices increased significantly. Secular and regular clergy now claimed control over the organisation of civic processions or the institution of religious confraternities.⁷⁸ Both the religious and secular higher authorities remained suspicious of public drama performances. Besides the fear of heterodoxy, moral arguments against the indecency of theatre were now being expressed.⁷⁹ The chambers of rhetoric adapted in different ways to this new climate. In 1612, after a few decades of decline, *In the Honour of Mary* in Ghent had a new start. However, although it continued to style itself as a “chamber of rhetoric,” the accounts no longer show expenses for theatrical activities. Until well into the 18th century *In the Honour of Mary* continued as a religious confraternity that invested considerably in religious music, but apparently not in theatre.⁸⁰ The Gillyflowers, the most prominent chamber of rhetoric in Antwerp, followed a different path. It remained a theatrical society but introduced a formal distinction between amateurs of the art of rhetoric and trained actors. From the 1640s onwards steps were taken towards the commercialisation of theatre: spectators had to pay an entrance fee to watch the plays in The Gillyflowers’ meeting hall.⁸¹

77 Van Dixhoorn, *Lustige geesten*, 214–226 and 252–262.

78 Margit Thøfner, *A Common Art. Urban Ceremonial in Antwerp and Brussels during and after the Dutch Revolt* (Zwolle: 2007), 255–264; Pollmann, *Catholic Identity*, 143–147; Jeffrey Muller, *St. Jacob's Antwerp Art and Counter-Reformation in Rubens's Parish Church* (Leiden: 2016).

79 Van Bruaene, *Om beters wille*, 176 and 185.

80 Anne-Laure Van Bruaene, “De contouren van een nieuw cultuurmodel. Rederijkers in Vlaanderen en Brabant in de zeventiende eeuw,” *Handelingen der Koninklijke Zuid-Nederlandse Maatschappij voor Taal- en Letterkunde en Geschiedenis* 58 (2005): 229–230.

81 Katrien Goossens and Maarten F. Van Dijck, “Rederijkerskamers tussen oude en nieuwe theatercultuur. De Antwerpse rederijkerskamer De Violieren en de opkomst van een commerciële cultuur (1619–1762),” *Stadsgeschiedenis* 7.1 (2012), 22–41; B.A.M. Ramakers, “Sophonisba's Dress. Costume, Tragedy and Value on the Antwerp Stage (c.1615–1630),” *Netherlandish Yearbook for History of Art* 24 (2014): 299–346.

Although the rhetoricians in the 17th-century Habsburg Netherlands were less visible in the public sphere, their social status certainly did not decline. On the contrary, there was a clear tendency towards a closed literary sociability between representatives of the local elites and of the higher middle classes. This was partly due to the upward social mobility of visual artists and other highly-skilled artisans. The Cornflower and The Book in Brussels still recruited among well-to-do tapestry weavers and managed to attract considerably more members than in the turbulent second half of the 16th century.⁸² We are best informed about The Holy Ghost in Bruges, which was probably the oldest chamber of rhetoric in the Low Countries (instituted in 1428). The chamber's membership now consisted of a mix of middle-class and elite citizens. At the end of the 17th century, in particular, representatives of the local political elite registered in large numbers. At the same time, The Holy Ghost did not participate any longer in public religious manifestations such as the annual Holy Blood procession, although other guilds continued to do so. The corporation now focused on the celebration of its own religious feasts, like the feasts of Epiphany and of the Trinity and the patron feast on Maundy Thursday. Although still motivated by a belief in the workings of the Holy Spirit, these festivities had turned into full-blown society events.⁸³

5 Conclusion

The chambers of rhetoric were many things. Therefore they can be studied through the lens of literary history, art history, or social history. They have left an impressive amount of sources, ranging from statutes, account books, and matriculation lists, to manuscript and printed literary texts, not to mention material objects (for example, painted or sculpted emblems). Because of the wide geographical proliferation of the chambers of rhetoric, their long chronology, the particularities of regions and cities, and the different life paths of rhetoricians, it is impossible to write the history of "the" chamber of rhetoric. None the less, this chapter has endeavoured to offer a concise overview of general developments, with an emphasis on the dialectics with patterns of religious change. In so doing, this contribution has tried to sketch the contours of

82 Van Bruaene, "De contouren van een nieuw cultuurmodel," 230–233.

83 Petra Vanhoutte, "Noyt zoo grooten luyster van Edeldom. Een sociale analyse van de rederijderskamer van de Heilige Geest in het zeventiende-eeuwse Brugge," *Genootschap voor Geschiedenis te Brugge* 141 (2004): 43–99; Id., "De Brugse rederijderskamer van De Heilige Geest in de zeventiende eeuw: identiteit en representatie," *Jaarboek de Fonteyne* 59 (2009): 9–52.

a civic religion particular to the Low Countries, which was broadly supported in a social sense and which integrated large cities, small towns, and villages.

The three centuries between 1400 and 1700 roughly coincide with three stages in this general history. In the 15th century a new, more engaged and self-conscious lay devotion arising in the circles of educated guild masters led to the institution of the first chambers of rhetoric. From the outset there was an emphasis on the creative handling of religious texts, including vernacular Bibles. In the 16th century this *habitus* guaranteed the success of the chambers of rhetoric, both in town and countryside. In this age the rhetoricians' thirst for religious knowledge was an important factor in the great openness for Reformation thought in the Low Countries. This certainly did not imply that every rhetorician embraced Protestantism or was an avid reader of Scripture, but it is revealing that the chambers of rhetoric were much better equipped for this new climate than traditional religious confraternities. The exceptional mix of collective action and individual expression shows how flexible the *confraternitas* model was in the highly urbanised region of the Low Countries.

In the new confessional age that dawned at the end of the 16th century, the chambers of rhetoric were pushed more and more towards religious conformism. Although they certainly remained part of the civic body, both in the Dutch Republic and the Habsburg Netherlands the companies of rhetoric gradually became less visible in the public sphere. In the 17th century their members preferred to invest in a closed literary sociability and, in so doing, helped to pave the way for a commercial theatre. This proves that the chambers of rhetoric were remarkably resilient civic corporations. When in 1700 The Fountain in Ghent was revived by a group of poetry lovers, it was not accidentally dubbed "the phoenix guild."⁸⁴ The parameters of civic religion may have dramatically changed between 1400 and 1700, but the chambers of rhetoric remained literary confraternities that offered ordinary men a forum to express—in verse—their faith and other social beliefs.

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84 Freddy Van Besien, "De Fontaine in de eerste helft van de achttiende eeuw," *Jaarboek de Fontaine* 55 (2005): 157–199.

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Confraternities and Poetry: The Francophone *Puys*

Dylan Reid

1 Introduction

For several centuries, a cluster of confraternities in the northern part of what is now France organised *puys*, competitions of poetry devoted to praising the Virgin. Beyond the *puys*, a few other confraternities in different parts of Europe also engaged in poetry.¹

The confraternal nature of the *puys* shaped the features of the poetry, making it collective, highly structured, and devotional. In turn, these characteristics enabled the poetry competitions to help propagate the confraternal mission of brotherhood and faith. The number of confraternities whose primary focus lay in writing poetry was small, but at times they had considerable influence within their city and even beyond. This influence can be attributed in part to their elite membership and their role as “civic” confraternities that aimed to represent the city as a whole.

This article will begin with an outline of the history of the *puys*—their origin and dissemination. It will also briefly survey other associations that sponsored poetry and can serve as useful comparisons to the *puys*. It will then delve into the institutional structure of the *puy* confraternities, followed by a description of their distinctive poetry contests and those who participated in them. A brief discussion of the nature of the poetry itself will help orient this verse within the overall context of French literature of the period and show how it was integrated into its confraternal environment. The following section will look at how this poetic output was related to other confraternal artistic activities: theatre, music, and the visual arts. The article will conclude with a broader assessment of the civic role played by these confraternities within their community.

1 For the rhetorician societies of the low countries, see the article by Anne-Laure Van Bruaene elsewhere in this collection. I would like to thank the Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies at the University of Toronto for its continued support. I am grateful to Sandra Cureau, Michael Wintroub and Katell Lavéant for their advice and for sharing materials with me.

2 History of the Puys

The first references to a puy date to the 13th century, the last puy was founded in 1527, and several continued until the French Revolution. They began in the far north of the Francophone world and worked their way south to Normandy, where the most famous one was founded, fairly late, in Rouen. The term *puy* refers to a stage or dais, on which the poetry was presented. In Rouen, the term *palinod*, which refers to the refrain that was a common feature of puy poetry, also became a term that referred to the competition in general.² The devotional poetry of the puys was always dedicated to the Virgin, as were the confraternities that sponsored this poetry.

The first confraternity known to have organised the writing of poetry was the Carité de Notre Dame des Ardents of Arras, also sometimes referred to as the Confrérie des jongleurs et bourgeois, founded some time before 1194. This confraternity brought writers and performers together with prominent citizens of the city, and was the locus of a literary golden age in the city in the 13th century. The poetry written by its members included the first references to a “pui Notre-Dame” along with some of the characteristics of puy poetry, such as a dedication to a “prince” who presides over the puy and a competition where a winning poet is crowned. Much of the poetry associated with the confraternity is secular, but some poets also wrote Marian verse.³ Because the evidence for the puy can be found only in the poems themselves, the nature of the Arras puy and its relationship to the confraternity remain obscure, but it seems likely that the origins of the concept of a puy lie in the vibrant literary culture of Arras.⁴

The puy format took clearer shape in a series of competitions in cities near Arras. Here the puys focused their poetry on a particular devotion, the mid-August Assumption of the Virgin. The first confraternity to organise a puy in this area was probably the Confrérie de Notre-Dame du Puy in Valenciennes,

2 For a discussion of the terminology, see Gérard Gros, *Le poète, la vierge et le prince du Puy: étude sur les Puys marials de la France du Nord du XI^e siècle à la Renaissance* (Paris: 1992), 25–30, and Denis Hüe, *La poésie palinodique à Rouen, 1486–1550* (Paris: 2002), 19–20.

3 Michèle Gally, *Parler d'amour au puy d'Arras* (Orléans: 2004), 35–37. Anne F. Sutton, “Merchants, Music and Social Harmony: The London Puy and its French and London Contexts, circa 1300,” *London Journal* 17:1 (1992), 6–7. Adrian Armstrong and Sarah Kay, *Knowing Poetry: Verse in Medieval France from the Rose to the Rhétoriciens* (Ithaca: 2011), 40. Gros, *Le poète*, 40. Lorna Stewart, “The Chant Royal, a Study of the Evolution of a Genre,” *Romania* 96:384 (1975), 492–493.

4 Carol Symes, *A Common Stage: Theatre and Public Life in Medieval Arras* (Ithaca: 2007), 216–219.

founded in 1229. The first verses known from this confraternity probably date to the early 14th century. In Douai, the confraternity of the Puy de l'Assomption and its associated poetry competition was founded in 1330. A puy dedicated to the Assumption was also founded in Lille sometime in this century, and there was another at Tournai, although little is known about it.⁵

These early puy inspired the establishment of puy in two capital cities, London and Paris. The Puy of London was probably established in the 1270s, directly influenced by the close commercial and political ties between Arras and London.⁶ A few decades later, starting in 1339 if not earlier, a Parisian confraternity, likely the goldsmiths, started a yearly puy, possibly influenced by the Puy of Valenciennes.⁷ Both puy, which were somewhat outside the core network, lasted only a few decades.

As the 15th century approached, the puy movement moved southwards with the establishment of the Confrérie du Puy Notre-Dame in Amiens in 1389. This puy is the most prominent and best-documented after Rouen. The date of the competition was Candlemas (2 February), a feast that was also important for the confraternities of Arras and London. The Amiens confraternity featured some distinctive characteristics. Its head—titled *Maître*, Master, rather than Prince—chose a refrain in advance that all competitors would use in their poems, and commissioned a painted panel that illustrated that refrain.⁸

Before discussing the Puy of Rouen, lesser-known puy that emerged in two other cities during the 15th century should be noted. In Dieppe, two puy are attested as being well-established by 1432, of the Assumption and the Nativity. The former was the more dominant and long-lasting one, sponsored

5 Gros, *Le poète*, 40–46. For Douai, see also Jacques Loys, *Les oeuvres poétiques de Jacques Loys* (Douai: 1613) for 17th century activity. I was not able to consult Roseanna Brusegan, "Culte de la Vierge et origine des puy et confréries en France au Moyen Age," *Revue de langues romanes* 95 (1991), 31–58.

6 Sutton, "Merchants, Music," 2–4 (statutes), 7–9 (date of foundation). See also Symes, *A Common Stage*, 219–221.

7 Gros, *Le poète*, 47–48. Gérard Gros, *Le poème du Puy marial. Étude sur le serventois et le chant royal du XIVe siècle à la Renaissance* (Paris: 1996), 53–61, 83.

8 Gros, *Le poète*, 39, 51–97. *Chants royaux et tableaux de la Confrérie du Puy Notre-Dame d'Amiens reproduits en 1517 pour Louise de Savoie, Duchesse d'Angoulême*, (ed.) Georges Durand (Amiens: 1911). M.A. Breuil, *La confrérie de Notre-Dame du Puy d'Amiens* (Amiens: 1854). Denis Hüe, "Esther, la Vierge et le Puy," in *Première poésie française de la Renaissance: autour des puy poétiques normands*, (eds.) Jean-Claude Arnould and Thierry Mantovani (Paris: 2003), 108–113. I was not able to consult François-Xavier Maillart, *La Confrérie du Puy Notre-Dame d'Amiens et sa production artistique et littéraire de 1389 à 1525* (Amiens: 2011) or Maurice Duvanel, Matthieu Pinette, Pierre Leroy, *La confrérie Notre-Dame du Puy d'Amiens* (Amiens: 1997).

by a prestigious eponymous confraternity.⁹ Another puy was begun in Abbeville, attested from 1498. It appears to have closely followed the model of nearby Amiens, with a Master who provided the refrain and had it illustrated by a painting, but its feast day was the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin (8 December), presumably following the example of Rouen.¹⁰

The Puy of Rouen was founded in 1486, sponsored by a confraternity that may or may not have existed beforehand (see below). It was dedicated to the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin, a devotion that was particularly associated with Normandy. While it began fairly modestly, in the 1510s a push to connect it to the wider world of French poetry and to establish its institutional pre-eminence, backed by Rouen's size and prosperity, established it as the most renowned of the confraternal poetry competitions in France. It attracted some of the leading poets in France and even had its statutes approved by the pope.¹¹ It also influenced another Rouen brotherhood, the Confraternity of the Passion, to try its hand at sponsoring a puy, but it was short-lived.¹²

The last city known to have founded a puy was Caen, in 1527. Its puy was modelled explicitly on the Puy of Rouen and similarly dedicated to celebrating the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin. A confraternity was founded at the same time as the puy, although the University of Caen remained the primary source of institutional support and funding for the event.¹³

It is possible there were other puyes that are no longer known. Several of the known puyes are attested only through one or two sources (London, Paris, Tournai). Had these not survived the vagaries of manuscript preservation, we would have no idea they existed. Many poems survive that are in characteristic puy formats but are anonymous or not connected to a particular puy—Gros, for example, hypothesises a puy in or near Beauvais based on such a poem.¹⁴ It could well be that further research will reveal additional examples of puyes.

9 Gros, *Le poète*, 143–146. David Asseline, *Les antiquitez et chroniques de la ville de Dieppe*, (eds.) Michel Hardy, Guérillon and L'Abbé Sauvage (1682; republished Dieppe: 1874), 170, 187–190.

10 Gros, *Le poète*, 99–101. Breuil, *La confrérie*, 91–106.

11 For the Puy of Rouen, see Hüe, *La poésie palinodique*; Dylan Reid, "Patrons of Poetry: Rouen's Confraternity of the Immaculate Conception of Our Lady," in *The Reach of the Republic of Letters: Literary and Learned Societies in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, (eds.) Arjan van Dixhoorn and Susie Speakman Sutch. 2 vols (Leiden: 2008), 33–78; and Gros, *Le poète*, 108–248.

12 See Hüe, *La poésie palinodique*, 308–311. Gros, *Le poète*, 137–139.

13 Charles de Bourgueville, *Les Recherches et antiquitez de la province de Neustrie* (1572; republished Caen: 1833), 350–353. Odile Malas Semboloni, "L'instauration du Puy de Palinods à Caen," *Bulletin de l'Association d'étude sur l'humanisme, la réforme et la renaissance* 48 (1999), 45–57.

14 Gros, *Le poète*, 106.

Some of the puy lasted only a few decades, others left little trace past the 16th century, and the Puy of the Assumption at Dieppe appears to have ended in the 17th century.¹⁵ Quite a few of the puy persisted for many centuries, however, even ones that were not all that prominent. The puy of Douai continued until 1778; the Amiens confraternity lasted until 1792, although its poetic activity had lapsed at the end of the 17th century; the confraternity of Abbeville survived until 1789.¹⁶

The puy of Rouen and Caen both also lasted until the French Revolution, but by that time they had long set aside whatever confraternal nature they once possessed. In the late 17th century the Puy of Rouen, following fashion, began to style itself as an academy. It even applied for formal patent letters to that effect, but never received that recognition. In both cities, the poetry was no longer restricted to religious themes, but engaged with a range of serious subjects. While the Puy of Rouen folded up shop in 1789, as soon as the Revolution began, the Puy of Caen attempted to navigate the increasingly troubled waters of the Revolution, resulting in a startling change of tone in its last years before finally ending its run in 1794.¹⁷

3 Other Poetic Confraternities

While the puy (along with the rhetoricians of the Low Countries) were the most significant examples of confraternities that sponsored poetry, there were a few other examples elsewhere. In Spain in the 16th and 17th centuries, some confraternities—as well as religious orders and sometimes civic authorities—began to hold poetry contests called *justas* to mark either exceptional religious occasions or simply a feast day. These were occasional events rather than yearly ones like the puy. As with the puy, however, the poetry was devotional in character, with the topic and formats strictly defined.¹⁸ There is also evidence that the prestigious Congregation of the Slaves of the most Holy Sacrament of

15 Asseline, *Les antiquitez*, 187–190. The contest was no longer active at the time he was writing (1682).

16 Gros, *Le poète*, 45, 51, 99. Breuil, *La confrérie*, 44.

17 For Rouen, see Reid, “Patrons of Poetry,” 75–76; Hüe, *La poésie palinodique*, 252–257. For Rouen’s application to become an academy, see Archives départementales de Seine-Maritime, D 546 (I am grateful to Mario Longtin for bringing this to my attention). For Caen, Eugène de Robillard de Beaurepaire, *Les puy de palinod de Rouen et Caen* (Caen: 1907), 5, 95, 271–385.

18 Francisco J. Álvarez, Ignacio García Aguilar and Inmaculada Osuna, “Seventeenth-Century Academies in the City of Granada: A Comparatist Approach,” in *The Reach of the Republic of Letters*, 316–319.

the Magdalene in Madrid, founded in 1608, held regular poetry contests, as well as sponsoring notable authors to write poetry to accompany its processions.¹⁹

Another poetic confraternity was that of the 15th-century humanist and teacher Pomponio Leto in Rome. Leto had been the centre of an informal circle of neo-Latin poets and scholars for many years, but in 1468 both he and members of his circle were arrested by the papacy on charges of conspiracy and more, though later released. In 1478, perhaps recognizing a need for a more transparent and formal status for his circle and better relations with the Church, Leto transformed his informal group into a formal confraternity, the *Sodalitas litteratorum sancti Victoris, Fortunati et Genesii*, which conveniently provided a feast day that coincided with the date of the founding of Rome. Like the puy, this confraternity organised a mass, a banquet, the reading of poems by their authors, and the awarding of a prize—in this case a laurel wreath, literally the crowning of a poet laureate. The poetry itself appears to have remained secular.²⁰

In France itself, another example of a confraternity that sponsored poetry (along with theatre), was the Rouen carnival society known as the Abbaye des Conards. The Abbey was also a formal confraternity, based in the priory of Notre-Dame de Bonnes-Nouvelles outside the city and, in that guise, sponsored masses and participated with other confraternities in civic processions. The poetry of the Conards was comic and satirical, proclaimed aloud during carnival or distributed in printed pamphlets.²¹ The Abbey may have been exceptional—most other festive societies do not appear to have had a confraternal structure behind them.²²

19 Elena Sánchez de Madariaga, "Writers and Religious Brotherhoods in Seventeenth Century Madrid: The Congregation of the Slaves of the *Santísimo Sacramento de la Magdalena*," *Confraternitas* 28:2 (2017), 26–30.

20 Susanna de Beer, "The Roman 'Academy' of Pomponio Leto: From an Informal Humanist Network to the Institution of a Literary Society," in *The Reach of the Republic of Letters*, 209–210, 216–218.

21 Dylan Reid, "Carnival in Rouen: A History of the Abbaye des Conards," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 32:4 (2001), 1032–1033.

22 For example, Marie Bouhaik-Girones states that the *Basoche*, the associations of law clerks in Paris and elsewhere that produced both poetry and theatre, was not a confraternity because it lacked any religious element, a patron saint, or any charitable role (Marie Bouhaik-Gironès, "The Basoche in the Late Middle Ages: A School of Technical Savoir-Faire," in *The Reach of the Republic of Letters*, 167). See also Katell Lavéant, "The Joyful Companies of The French-Speaking Cities and Towns of the Southern Netherlands and their Dramatic Culture (Fifteenth–Sixteenth Centuries)," in *The Reach of the Republic of Letters*, who mentions one confraternity that may have also been a festive society (93), but it is an exception.

Many other poetry associations and competitions existed that may have been influenced by the example of the puy, but did not choose to structure themselves as confraternities. These events and associations can make for interesting comparisons with the puy themselves as part of a continuum of collective literary activity in medieval and early modern Europe.²³ There are some examples of royal and aristocratic courts organizing occasional *puy d'amours*, puy of love, as competitions of love poetry.²⁴ In Rouen itself the presence of the puy appears to have inspired other, secular, collective poetry projects such as an occasional Puy of Love in the 1540s and a more institutional Puy of the Poor, sponsored by the city council, in the 1550s.²⁵ By far the most famous non-confraternal poetry association was the *Consistori de gai saber* of Toulouse, later known as the *Jeux Floraux*, the Floral Games, because its prizes were named after flowers. Founded in 1323, it organised a yearly poetry contest largely focused on devotional themes, with financial support from the city council.²⁶ In Germany, master-singing (*meistersang*) associations formed in many cities in the late 15th and the 16th centuries that organised "singing-schools"—competitions for composing and performing sung poetry, often on religious themes.²⁷ In Italy, the example of Pomponio Leto remained unusual—in most cases, literary associations took the form of secular academies, with little or no religious element.²⁸ This academy format then migrated to other nations of Europe and became the dominant format for new literary associations²⁹—even tempting, as we have seen, the Puy of

23 See *The Reach of the Republic of Letters*.

24 Sutton, "Merchants, Music," 2.

25 See Pierre Du Val, *Le puy du souverain amour*, (ed.) P. Le Verdier (1543; reprint Rouen: 1920), and Pierre Du Val, *Théâtre mystique de Pierre du Val et les libertins spirituels de Rouen au XVIe siècle*, (ed.) Émile Picot (1882; reprint Geneva: 1969). Jacques Sireulde, *Le trésor immortel tiré de l'écriture sainte par Jacques Sireulde*, (ed.) Charles de Robillard de Beauraupaire (1556; reprint Rouen: 1899).

26 Laura Kendrick, "The Consistori Del Gay Saber of Toulouse (1323–Circa 1484)," in *The Reach of the Republic of Letters*. Yvonne Bellenger, "Puy et Jeux Floraux: des 'épisséries' aux académies" in *Première poésie française*, 531–542. Nathalie Dauvois, "L'évolution des formes lyriques dans les pièces primées aux Jeux Floraux toulousains (XVe–XVIe siècles)," in *Première poésie française*, 555–576. Gros, *Le poète*, 35–36. F. de Gélis, *Histoire critique des jeux floraux depuis leur origine jusqu'à leur transformation en Académie (1323–1694)* (Toulouse: 1912).

27 Michael Baldzuhn, "The Companies of *Meistersang* in Germany," in *The Reach of the Republic of Letters*, 219–256, and personal correspondence.

28 See for example Inge Werner, "The Heritage of the Umidì: Performative Poetry in the Early Accademia Fiorentina," in *The Reach of the Republic of Letters*, 257–284.

29 For example, Álvarez et al., "Seventeenth-Century Academies" for Spain.

Rouen. The *Jeux Floraux* of Toulouse did, in fact, successfully transition to the academy model, with formal patent letters from the monarch in 1694.³⁰

4 Organisation

The relationship of the confraternity to the poetry contest that it sponsored can be revealing. Was the poetry an extension of the devotional goals of the confraternity, or was the confraternity a way of giving institutional stability to a poetry contest? The statutes, for example, might put their emphasis on devotion (such as those of Valenciennes), or, by contrast, the poetry (such as those of Rouen).³¹ The timing of the foundation of the contest and the confraternity can also be revealing. In some cases, the confraternity and the competition appear to have been founded simultaneously (the confraternities of Valenciennes and Amiens both have “Puy” in the confraternity’s name). But in other cases, one came before the other. In Rouen, the 1543 puy of the long-standing Confraternity of the Passion was an attempt to replace its former, now out of fashion cultural mission of organizing mystery plays. The Spanish *justas* were, likewise, organised by existing confraternities or other organisations. Conversely, in Rome Pomponio Leto’s association of poets turned themselves into a confraternity only after many years of informal activity. In Rouen, whether or not there was an existing confraternity before the puy is a matter of debate.³²

The confraternities that sponsored puy were generally small and exclusive. The one in Valenciennes had a maximum of 60 members; Rouen’s had a maximum of 72, but that number was never reached.³³ Since the confraternities were small, the institutional structure was generally fairly simple. In most cases a single person presided over the confraternity for the year, perhaps supported by a paid chaplain and a council of previous leaders. Confraternal business, including the choice of a Prince for the next year, was generally conducted on the feast day, after the morning mass for the members and before the poetry competition. In Rouen and Amiens, a new Prince or Master was chosen every year—in Rouen, the selection generally followed the order in which members had been inducted into the confraternity. In Dieppe, with possibly a smaller

30 Gélis, *Histoire critique*, 153–169.

31 For Valenciennes, Gros, *Le poète*, 42–43. For Rouen, *Approbation et confirmation par le Pape Léon X des statuts et privilèges de la Confrérie de l’Immaculée Conception* (1520; reprint Rouen: 1864).

32 Hüe, *La poésie palindodique*, 226–227. Reid, “Patrons of Poetry,” 36–37, 60.

33 Gros, *Le poète*, 42. *Approbation*, sig. ci. Reid, “Patrons of Poetry,” 43. Beaupaire, *Les puy*, 355.

pool of wealthy members to choose from, some Princes appear to have served for several years.³⁴

The cost of entering the confraternity was generally relatively high compared to other confraternities. The more significant barrier to entry was, however, the fact that when a member became Prince he was expected to cover most of the expenses of the feast day, including the banquet at the end.³⁵ The potential cost meant that the members of these confraternities generally came from the elite of the city. In most cases, they were exclusively male, although Valenciennes and perhaps some of the other early puy included women members.³⁶

The small size of the membership and the costs associated with it could lead to crises, sometimes a result of external events, in other cases brought on by the escalating cost of being the Prince or Master. Since puy were public events, and the banquets hosted some of the most notable residents of the city, the incentive for a presiding Prince to make the day as impressive as possible was strong. Many of the confraternities had to be re-founded at various points to address a decline of some kind—London around 1300, Valenciennes in 1426, Amiens in 1452, Caen in 1557. Rouen had to be re-founded twice, once in 1596, and again in 1669, and its registers at other times record problems with finding members willing to bear the costs of the feast day. Rouen and others sometimes tried to set a limit on the maximum contribution required of the Prince or Master, but such efforts do not appear to have been successful.³⁷

5 The Competition

The poetry competition took place after the mass and the business meeting. Ahead of the day, the contest was widely publicised through posters, both in the city and in surrounding regions.³⁸ In Amiens, the painting illustrating the

34 Gros, *Le poète*, 51, 99, 146. Reid, "Patrons of Poetry," 43. Breuil, *La confrérie*, 12.

35 Reid, "Patrons of Poetry," 43. The records from Caen include a useful list of all the various expenses that went into making a puy happen: the chaplain, the posters, the judges, renting the venue, the candles, people to set up the hall, ushers (Odile Malas Semboloni, "L'organisation du Puy de Caen d'après le manuscrit d'Estienne Du Val de Mondrainville," in *Première poésie française*, 405).

36 Gros, *Le poète*, 42–43.

37 Sutton, "Merchants, Music," 3. Gros, *Le poète*, 42–43, 52–53. Malas Semboloni, "L'organisation du Puy." Reid, "Patrons of Poetry," 57, 68–69, 74–75. Beaurepaire, *Les puy*, 91. Breuil, *La confrérie*, 21, 44.

38 Gros, *Le poète*, 44 (Valenciennes), 149–152 (text of Rouen 1533 poster). Hüe, *La poésie palinodique*, 261–267. Álvarez et al., "Seventeenth-Century Academies," 316. Malas Semboloni, "L'organisation du Puy," 403. *Le Puy de la Conception de Notre Dame fondé au Convent*

refrain for that year's contest was posted in the cathedral at Christmas, giving poets just over a month to come up with their compositions.³⁹

In the early puy, the poetry competitions appear to have most often been an internal, somewhat intimate event. At Valenciennes, the 1426 statutes describe the poetry competition taking place after a mid-day banquet, with the members of the confraternity reciting their poetry to each other.⁴⁰ This process reflects the origins of some poetry contests in informal associations of men who wanted to engage in literary play.⁴¹ Smaller, internal events gave more scope for literary games and improvisation, such as the playful and improvised poetry that sometimes featured at Rouen's closed banquet.⁴²

Later, however, it appears that in Valenciennes the event became public, open to all both to compete and to watch,⁴³ and that seems to have been true of most puy in the later period. Now the audience—and the poets—could include all segments of a city's society, from lowly workers to the most prestigious leaders, not to mention visitors from other cities.⁴⁴ Once the events became public, the process became more formal. In Rouen, the contest was held in a large hall, with the Prince presiding on stage and the designated judges alongside, all in front of a large audience. In Rouen and some other places, the contest began with last year's winners returning their prizes, which took the form of symbolic objects such as a crown or a ring, in exchange for a cash award. They would offer a "grace"—a poem—to the Prince in thanks.⁴⁵ That ceremony would be followed by the reading aloud of the poems in competition, by the poets themselves or a designated reader, who would then hand the written version of the poem to the judges. The adjudicating was generally done by specially chosen judges, such as clerics, teachers of rhetoric, or past winners of the competition, although the Prince may also have had a say.⁴⁶

des Carmes à Rouen, son Origine, erection, Statuts & Confirmation, s.l. (1615), 45, for the requirements for a poster in Rouen.

39 Gros, *Le poète*, 54.

40 Gally, *Parler d'amour*, 36–42. Gros, *Le poète*, 43.

41 See for example a case in Tournai, Katell Lavéant, *Un théâtre des frontières. La culture dramatique dans les provinces du Nord aux XVe et XVIe siècles* (Orléans: 2011), 88–89, and Armstrong and Kay, *Knowing Poetry*, 137. Other examples: Kendrick, "The Consistori," 17–21. Inge Werner, "The Heritage of the Umidi," 262–263, 269–278.

42 Denis Hüe, "Rouen, Décembre 1511: quelques notes sur le lexique d'après-boire," *Le moyen français* 35–36 (1996), 231–237. Reid, "Patrons of Poetry," 56. Gally, *Parler d'amour*, 70–75, 97–98. See also Werner, "The Heritage of the Umidi," 269–278.

43 Gros, *Le poète*, 44.

44 Reid, "Patrons of Poetry," 48–49. Hüe, *La poésie palinodique*, 50, 95.

45 Asseline, *Les antiquitez*, 188. Malas Semboloni, "L'organisation du Puy," 403. Reid, "Patrons of Poetry," 51, 53. For prizes, Hüe, *La poésie palinodique*, 289–292.

46 Hüe, *La poésie palinodique*, 285–289, 333–334. Reid, "Patrons of Poetry," 48. Malas Semboloni, "L'organisation du Puy," 402–403.

In Rouen, the competition was followed by the banquet, although in some puy's the banquet came first. In some cities, the poets were included in the banquet—an additional incentive for submitting a poem to the competition (one Rouen poem even makes a joke to that effect). The banquet, while often treated as superficial even at the time, was an important part of the puy's activities. Here the members of the puy reinforced the “singular love and brotherhood with one another, founded in the virtue of charity” that was a core mission of the confraternity. In addition to eating and drinking together, this fellowship could at times be reinforced with literary games of improvised comic poetry, and the joint viewing of a play composed and performed for the occasion.⁴⁷

6 Princes and Poets

Once the puy's became public events, the members of the puy confraternities became less likely to write poetry themselves. In Rouen, some members of the confraternity did submit poetry in the early years, but after the first couple of decades that practice became rare. Effectively, the puy confraternities became collective patrons of poetry. Wealthy though they were, the members could not themselves be patrons of the arts the way that rulers and aristocrats could. By coming together collectively, however, they could become joint patrons of literature and each member could, for one year, bask in the glory of being the Prince, receiving the flattery of poets and sponsoring the cultural vitality of their city. And when they died, the statutes of the Rouen confraternity even specified that each Prince should be eulogised by the winners of that year's puy.⁴⁸ This practice was not unlike the mechanism whereby a group of people gathered in a confraternity could emulate the aristocratic practice of founding a private chapel, though in this case it was for a literary, as well as a spiritual, family.⁴⁹ Princes who wished for a longer-term legacy might also establish permanent poetry prizes.

With the possible exception of Arras, the poets themselves were largely amateurs—people who wrote poetry only occasionally and whose income came from elsewhere. The puy's were designed specifically to enable this kind

47 *Approbation*, sig. c1: “un amour et fraternite singuliere les ungtz avec les autres fondee en la vertu de charite.” Hüe, *La poésie palinodique*, 292–297. Reid, “Patrons of Poetry,” 57–58. Breuil, *La confrérie*, 12, indicates the poets were part of the banquet in Amiens as well. Gros, *Le poème*, 362, poem by Canillet.

48 *Approbation*, sig. c5. *Le Puy de la Conception*, 70.

49 Reid, “Patrons of Poetry,” 45–46. Catherine Vincent, *Des charités bien ordonnées: les confréries normandes de la fin du XIIIe siècle au début du XVIe siècle* (Paris: 1988), 143.

of amateur participation. The rules for the poetry—the subjects, the correct formats—were set out very clearly in the posters advertising the events. The advance notice and specific performance date gave poets a lot of time to prepare and guaranteed them an audience.⁵⁰

The puy could also provide support or a jump start for broader careers in writing. The 13th-century poet and musician Adam de la Halle and other notable Arras writers emerged from the milieu of the confraternity. The poet, playwright and writer Jean Parmentier and his colleague Pierre Crignon emerged in the early 16th century from the milieu of the Dieppe puy(s).⁵¹ In Rouen, many poets first appeared as competitors at the puy and then went on to publish their own poetry and writing.⁵² At its height in the early 16th century, Rouen's puy also welcomed court poets, including Jean Marot and his soon-to-be more famous son Clément.⁵³ A few other writers of national stature also made appearances at a puy early in their career, including Pierre Corneille's brother, the playwright Thomas Corneille, in 17th-century Rouen, and Jacques Clinchamps de Malfilâtre in 18th-century Caen. Jacqueline Pascal, sister of the philosopher Blaise Pascal, was the first woman to win a prize at the Puy of Rouen, at the tender age of fifteen.⁵⁴

7 The Poetry

For many centuries, the poetry of the puy was generally treated with disdain. It began with a famous dismissal by the French Renaissance poet Joachim du Bellay in 1549, who charged that the old poetry styles practiced by the Puy “corrupt the taste of our language.”⁵⁵ Although some contemporaries disagreed,

50 Hüe, *La poésie palinodique*, 334–341. Reid, “Patrons of Poetry,” 46. See also Baldzuhn, “The Companies,” 235.

51 Michael Wintroub, *The Voyage of Thought: Navigating Knowledge across the Sixteenth-Century World* (Cambridge: 2017), 72, 82.

52 Sandra Cureau, “Édition critique des oeuvres poétiques de Jean Auvray (1580?–1624), poète rouennais,” Doctoral thesis, Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 2011, 49–51. Reid, “Patrons of Poetry,” 60–61.

53 Denis Hüe, “Les Marot et le Puy de Rouen, remarques sur le manuscrit BnF fr 2205,” *Nouvelle Revue du XVI^e siècle* 16:2 (1998). François Rigolot, “Un chant royal ‘sans macule’: modestie et ambition littéraire de Jean Marot à Rouen,” in *Première poésie française*. Other notable poets who participated included André de la Vigne (Cynthia Brown, “André de la Vigne au Puy de 1511: étude du manuscrit Douce 379 de la Bibliothèque Bodléienne,” in *Première poésie française*) and Guillaume Cretin.

54 Reid, “Patrons of Poetry,” 74. Beaurepaire, *Les puy*s, 322–326.

55 Joachim Du Bellay, *La deffence et illustration de la langue françoise* (1549; reprint Genève: 2001), 85: “corrompent le goust de nostre langue.”

this negative attitude continued well into the 20th century.⁵⁶ Even the Norman antiquary Eugène de Robillard de Beaurepaire, whose extensive treatise on the Puits of Rouen and Caen was published in 1907, described their poetry as “for the most part desperately monotonous, rarefied and pretentious.”⁵⁷ Since the 1990s, however, that attitude has changed. Scholars have developed a more sophisticated understanding of this poetry and the context of its devotional purpose, and now recognise it as part of the mainstream of French poetry at the time.⁵⁸ Of course, given the open nature of the competitions, some of the poetry is not of great quality, but even the less interesting poems can be useful sources for insight into devotional ideas and approaches.

The poetry of the puits was an evolution of courtly poetry, but adapted to an urban and confraternal context in which it became collective, and focused primarily on devotion rather than on love. The object of the poetry shifted from a desired secular woman to the worshipped divine woman, the Virgin Mary.⁵⁹ The act of poetry, performed with fellow-citizens of the city, became itself confraternal. As Thierry Mantovani says, collectively composing, presenting, and listening to poems celebrating an aspect of the Virgin Mary was a communion in celebration of that devotion.⁶⁰ The nature of the poetry itself was also shaped by the collective context. As in a confraternity or a guild, there were specific rules to follow in order to be part of the brotherhood of poets—the poems were in fixed forms with carefully defined rules of composition. Mastering poetry was seen as a form of expertise—the printed collection of puit poems refers to the poets as “scientific persons.”⁶¹

56 Yvonne Bellenger has argued that Du Bellay's influence at the time has been exaggerated; see Bellenger, “Puits et Jeux Floraux,” 537. Gros, *Le poème*, 181–182. Dauvois, “L'évolution des formes lyriques,” 564–565.

57 Beaurepaire, *Les puits*, 265: “les poésies palinodique [...] sont le plus souvent d'une monotonie, d'une subtilité et d'une prétention désespérantes.”

58 Thierry Mantovani, “Introduction,” in *Première poésie française*, 7–16. Armstrong and Kay, *Knowing Poetry*. Brown, “André de la Vigne,” 180. Gérard Defaux, “La myrrhe, l'aloès et la manne: pour une lecture mariale de *Délie*,” in *Première poésie française*, 243–261. Bellenger, “Puits et Jeux Floraux,” 541. Gros, *Le poème*, 15, 97–123. See also the Select Bibliography.

59 Gros, *Le poème*, 33. Stewart, “The Chant Royal.” François Rouget, “Une forme reine des Puits poétiques: la ballade,” in *Première poésie française*, 331. Dauvois, “L'évolution des formes lyriques,” 555, 559. Gally, *Parler d'amour*, 24, 47–48, 97. Terence Cave, *Devotional Poetry in France, c.1570–1613* (Cambridge, UK: 1969), 194–196.

60 Thierry Mantovani, “Le manuscrit BNF ms. fr. 1538,” in *Première poésie française*, 96. See also Gally, *Parler d'amour*, 83, and Denis Hüe, “Le poète du Puy et ses auditoires,” in *Les arts du spectacle dans la ville (1404–1721)*, (eds.) Marie-France Wagner and Claire Le Brun-Gouanvic (Paris: 2001), 80–109.

61 Armstrong and Kay, *Knowing Poetry*, 137. Wintroub, *The Voyage of Thought*, 84.

In the earliest puy, the format for the poems in the competition was the *serventois*, a term used particularly for poetry devoted to the Virgin.⁶² Later, the competitions began using the *chant royal* as their primary poem. Both were fairly long poems well suited to the serious and sententious demonstration of an article of faith.⁶³ They each featured a short *envoi* at the end that addressed the Prince directly, and the *chant royal* usually featured a repeated refrain that illustrated the nature of the devotion chosen by the puy. Later puy also introduced prizes for shorter formats such as the ballad and *rondeau*, which were more likely to be used for lyrical expressions of faith.⁶⁴ By the end of the 16th century, more modern types of poems began to be introduced, such as sonnets, *stances*, and odes.⁶⁵

The primary language of puy poetry was the vernacular, French. This choice was significant, demonstrating a goal of being open to a wide range of poets and reaching a wide audience to propagate the confraternity's devotion. But other languages might also be used at times. There were a few examples of poems in local dialect, sometimes for comic effect.⁶⁶ A prize for Latin poetry was introduced in Rouen in 1511, and the university town of Caen also included one. Additional Latin poems were added at these puy in the 17th century, but they always remained secondary.⁶⁷

62 See Gros, *Le poème*, Part 1.

63 See Gros, *Le poème*, Part 2. Hüe, *La poésie palinodique*, 885–935. Stewart, "The Chant Royal." Armstrong and Kay, *Knowing Poetry*, 41–42.

64 Rouget, "Une forme reine." Breuil, *La confrérie*, 14, 100. *Approbation*, sig. b5. Loys, *Les oeuvres poétiques*, "Avant-propos" (n.p.). Gérard Gros, "Le rondeau marial au Puy de Rouen," *Nouvelle revue du XVIe siècle* 14:2 (1996), 117–154. Asseline, *Les antiquitez*, 188. Malas Semboloni, "L'instauration," 50. Malas Semboloni, "L'organisation du Puy," 404.

65 For example, Beaurepaire, *Les puy*, 126–127. Nicolas Lombart, "Des stances pour la vierge: Claude Groulart et la rénovation des palinods de Rouen (1595–1596)," in *Première poésie française*, 447–461. Bibliothèque Municipale de Rouen, Fonds de l'Académie 92p (various new prize foundations). *Le Puy de la Conception*, 48. Breuil, *La confrérie*, 199–201. Beaurepaire, *Les puy*, 263, 319, 344–345. See also Cave, *Devotional Poetry*, 194–195. Hüe, *La poésie palinodique*, 253–254. Malas Semboloni, "L'organisation du Puy," 405.

66 *Petite anthologie palinodique, 1486–1550*, (ed.) Denis Hüe (Paris: 2002), 335–337 (in Picard dialect, presented to the Prince rather than in competition) and 338–339 (in Norman dialect). David Ferrand, *Inventaire général de la Muse normande* (Rouen: David Ferrand, 1660).

67 Katell Lavéant, "Project d'édition de l'ensemble de l'oeuvre poétique de Guillaume Thibault (XVIe siècle) et édition des épigrammes latines," DEA (MA) thesis, Université Rennes 2—Haute Bretagne, 2002, 51–55, 75. Bourgueville, *Les Recherches*, 350. Malas Semboloni, "L'instauration," 52–53. Beaurepaire, *Les puy*, 261, 263, 351. Bibliothèque Municipale de Rouen, Fonds de l'Académie 92p (Latin ode foundation by François de Harlay).

8 Other Arts

Poetry was a relatively rare activity for confraternities. A much larger number engaged in commissioning other arts: theatre, music, and visual arts. So it is not surprising that many of the puy confraternities also engaged in these artistic endeavours. What is exceptional and interesting is that their poetic activity was often integrated with these other artistic activities. The arts spoke to each other, giving them additional dimensions that might not be present in similar activities by other confraternities.

8.1 *Theatre*

Many confraternities that sponsored puy also included the production of a play during their feast day. Like the poetic competition, the theatrical performance was a way of publicly perpetuating and explaining the devotion as part of a collective experience, so that the two literary activities were mutually reinforcing. The Valenciennes confraternity put on a mystery play in their church on the Sunday before the Feast of the Assumption. The Paris goldsmiths were already producing a *Miracle of Our Lady* play when they started adding the poetry competition to the proceedings. And Dieppe's celebration of the Feast of the Assumption included theatre produced by the confraternity in addition to the poetry competition.⁶⁸ These were public performances, and it seems likely that in these cases, the same text was used every year. In Amiens and Rouen, however, completely new plays were written for each performance and the plays were produced for a closed audience, after the banquet. Theatre of the period was versified, so it relied on many of the same skills as writing poetry. In composing new dramatic pieces, puy that also sponsored theatre could thus draw on a strong talent pool and a repertoire of imagery that had already been developed to interpret their devotion. In Amiens, an annual theatrical performance (of which only one survives) was required by the statutes.⁶⁹ At Rouen, three plays survive, plus a reference to a fourth, all of which appear to have been written by someone associated with the puy.⁷⁰ In addition to sponsoring

68 Gros, *Le poète*, 41, 47. Gros, *Le poème*, 83. Asseline, *Les antiquitez*, 170–175, 186–187.

69 Breuil, *La confrérie*, 12. Katell Lavéant, "Personal Expression of a Playwright or Public Discourse of a Confraternity? A Performance at the Puy de Notre-Dame in Amiens in 1473," in *Drama, Performance and Debate: Theatre and Public Opinion in the Early Modern Period*, (eds.) Jan Bloemendal, Peter G.F. Eversmann, and Elsa Strietman (Leiden: 2013), 22–23. Other plays are referenced, some of which were performed at other times of the year.

70 Hüe, *La poésie palinodique*, 392–416. Jay E. Moore, "La Morale de Sapience et la question de l'Immaculée Conception," in *Première poésie française*, 37–50. Guillaume Tasserrie, *Le triomphe des Normands suivi de La Dame a l'agneau par G. Thibault*, (ed.) P. Le Verdier

this theatre, in both Amiens and Rouen there is evidence that members of the puy contributed to the broader dramatic life of their city.⁷¹

8.2 *Music*

The puy poetry formats were derived from a musical tradition, and in the early puy the poetry in the competition was set to music. The direct connection between music and poetry disappeared in the 14th century, but the memory of the connection continued—a charming 1533 poem praising Rouen says that there “we see beautiful singing” when referring to the puy’s poetry, and in the 17th century a disquisition from Douai on the *chant royal* compares it to music.⁷² Although the poetry itself was no longer sung, music continued to play a role in the later puy. The Rouen play of 1499 includes two musical interludes, and the 1544 one was called a *choral* and alternated sung sections with dialogue. The Prince might also hire trumpets to give a sense of occasion to the competition—the revised statutes of Valenciennes (1426) and Rouen (1614) even required them—and musicians to entertain the guests at the banquet. Finally, the puy provided a template for a musical equivalent, Puy of Saint-Cecilia that held competitions for the best pieces of devotional music. These were organised by Confraternities of Saint Cecilia that provided associations for musicians. Between them, the puy in Rouen provided considerable patronage and employment for the city’s musicians.⁷³

8.3 *Visual Arts*

Many confraternities commissioned paintings or frescoes, often to adorn their chapels. In some puy, however, the poetic activity provided the opportunity for a wider range of artistic commissions that were closely integrated with the poetry. These images were not just a simple illustration of the confraternity’s devotion, but rather an exploration of a metaphor or image that symbolised and elaborated on the devotion, adding greater complexity to the devotion’s iconography. Together, verse and painting served to reinforce each

(Rouen: 1898). Denis Hüe, “Politique et polémique dans deux moralités du Puy de Rouen,” in *Le Théâtre polémique français*, eds Marie Bouhaïk-Gironès, Jelle Koopmans, and Katell Lavéant (Rennes: 2008), 139–160.

71 Lavéant, “Personal Expression,” 24. Tasserie, *Le triomphe des Normands*, xxi–xxiii.

72 Gros, *Le poème*, 28, 99, 129. Sutton, “Merchants, Music,” 3. *Petite anthologie*, 369: “l’on voit belle chanterie.” Loys, *Les oeuvres poétiques*, 40–41. Gally, *Parler d’amour*, 71–72. Rouget, “Une forme reine,” 330–331, 345.

73 Dylan Reid, “The Virgin and Saint Cecilia: Music in the Confraternal Puy of Rouen,” *Confraternitas* 8:2 (1997), 3–8; in 1636, the Prince of the Puy of Rouen created a scandal when he refused to pay for the trumpets. Gros, *Le poète*, 43.

other's message of piety and fraternity. The Puy of Amiens closely integrated the visual arts and poetry through the painting commissioned by the Master to illustrate his chosen refrain. The painting generally foregrounded the Virgin, surrounded by imagery that illustrated the refrain, while the Prince knelt in the foreground accompanied by an unfurled scroll where the refrain was written out. From 1492 onwards, the painting was donated to the cathedral, creating a gallery of devotional imagery visible to the public. Most of the original paintings are now lost, but a few survive and many others were reproduced in a manuscript.⁷⁴ While other puy did not have such a tradition, some puy manuscripts are accompanied by elaborate and sophisticated illuminations illustrating the themes in the poetry.⁷⁵ The puy thus provided ample opportunity for patronage of the visual arts, whose combination of image with text generated a rich vein of iconography.

9 The Puy and the City

The associations that sponsored the puy can be thought of as civic confraternities—that is, confraternities that aimed to represent the city as a whole, rather than a particular community (whether profession or craft, neighbourhood, or other form of identity) within the city. As a civic confraternity, puy had the opportunity to give voice to a city's self-image, reinforcing a unifying identity both internally and to the outside world. As well, because their members came from a variety of professions and networks and lived in a variety of neighbourhoods, they helped to form what sociologists describe as “bridging” ties within the city—that is, linkages between more strongly defined (“bonding”) communities. Bridging links are often seen as important for ensuring that different factions within a society are able to work with each other and overcome conflict.⁷⁶ Of course, the civic ideal was not always realised—puy

74 Durand, *Chants royaux*. Marie-Christine Gomez-Geraud, “Espace et symbole: figurations typologiques dans les miniatures du manuscrit amiénois offert à Louise de Savoie,” in *Première poésie française*, 465–476. Gros, *Le poète*, 53–54, 56–71.

75 Myra Dickman Orth, “Les puy en images. L'illustration des palinods de Rouen dans les manuscrits de la Bibliothèque Nationale de France (ms. fr. 379 et 1537)” in *Première poésie française*.

76 Dylan Reid, “Piety, Poetry and Politics: Rouen's Confraternity of the Immaculate Conception and the French Wars of Religion” in *Early Modern Confraternities in Europe and the Americas: International and Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, (eds.) Christopher Black and Pamela Gravestock (Aldershot: 2006), 151–154. These bonds are also sometimes described as “weak” and “strong.”

were in fact run by a small elite within the city, and were quite capable of factionalism themselves. Nonetheless, through the public nature of their competitions, the puy brought together many different elements of the population, aspiring to a civic role even if they did not always achieve it.

9.1 *Founding Myths*

One way that puy gave voice to a civic identity was through the devotion they chose, often linked to a founding myth. The Carité de Notre-Dame des Ardents of Arras harked back to a miracle in which a plague in Arras was cured by the Virgin through the agency of two feuding minstrels. She sent them each to the bishop of Arras to tell him how to receive a sacred candle from the Virgin that cured the plague. The sacred candle became a core element of Arras' identity, and the literary confraternity was its guardian.⁷⁷ For Rouen, the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception had long been strongly connected with Normandy. The founding myth of this connection, repeated in the confraternity's statutes, went back to time of William the Conqueror when the Anglo-Norman abbot Helsin prayed to the Virgin for safety when his ship was caught in a storm. In a vision, an angel (or the Virgin) promised him safety in exchange for establishing the feast of the Immaculate Conception in Normandy. Since the Immaculate Conception was a controversial doctrine, advocating it strongly through poetry became a distinctive way of asserting Norman identity and Rouen's leadership of the province.⁷⁸ In Dieppe, interestingly, a foundation story became associated with the confraternity after its foundation. The puy dedicated to the feast of the Assumption of the Virgin was already established when a siege of the city by the English was raised on the eve of the Feast of the Assumption in 1443. The feast became a key civic festival in celebration of this historic event, and the confraternity's dedication to this feast was later assumed to be part of this celebration.⁷⁹

The puy poets expressed civic pride in other ways, as well. The poems might reference civic touchpoints, such as the lamb that was the city symbol of Rouen.⁸⁰ In Caen, the first winning poem managed to compare the Immaculate Conception to a perfect university, referencing the city institution that

77 Symes, *A Common Stage*, 86–92.

78 See Hüe, *La poésie palinodique*, 32–134. *Approbation*, sig. a2. Reid, "Patrons of Poetry," 38–40.

79 Asseline, *Les antiquitez*, 174–190, although he also questions whether it was founded earlier (189–190).

80 Rigolot, "Un chant royal," 318. Hüe, "Les Marot," 245–247. See also *Petite anthologie*, 269–292.

sponsored the competition.⁸¹ Civic pride also took more subtle forms, using imagery that celebrated the industries that defined their economies and made the city—and often, the Princes—prosperous. Rouen and Dieppe, both important seaports, saw a great deal of poetry that used maritime images and allegory.⁸² Many poems in Rouen similarly referred to the textile industries that formed a core part of its economy, along with many other professions and crafts.⁸³ Hüe emphasises how this “urban poetry” was a remarkable and unusual celebration of the city itself, in the form of specifically urban life and work.⁸⁴ The puy also represented the city to the outside world and contributed to establishing its image as a centre of culture.⁸⁵ In Arras, the confraternity helped to make the city an important literary centre. Rouen’s puy became, for a while, a touchpoint of its identity as a major city in France—the charming verse description of Rouen devotes almost a tenth of its 86 lines to “the honoured festival of the Puy.”⁸⁶

9.2 *Puys and Politics*

As civic confraternities that could literally speak for the city, through their poetry, the puy sometimes addressed political, economic, and religious events that affected their city and the broader world. Hüe describes the puy as an “urban and political project” whose political dimension is essential and reflects a new urban consciousness.⁸⁷ The most straightforward political element was praise of the French monarchy and celebrations of battles or other patriotic topics.⁸⁸ The Puy of Amiens seized an opportunity to flatter Louise of Savoy, mother of King Francis I, when she admired its paintings in the cathedral and asked for a copy. The Masters commissioned a manuscript that reproduced the

81 Bourgueville, *Les Recherches*, 353–355. This tradition of poems praising the university continued throughout the puy’s existence, see for example Beaurepaire, *Les puy*s, 304, 317.

82 Denis Hüe, “De Dieppe à Rouen, îles, mers et navigation” in *Mondes marins du Moyen Âge*, (ed.) Chantal Connochie-Bourgne (Aix-en-Provence: 2006), 199–218. Orth, “Les puy en images,” 54. Wintroub, *The Voyage of Thought*, 72–89.

83 See Hüe, *La poésie palinodique*, 805–884. *Petite anthologie*, 293–313. Orth, “Les puy en images,” 57, 60.

84 Hüe, *La poésie palinodique*, 25–26, 940.

85 Malas Semboloni, “L’organisation du Puy,” 400, 406; Malas Semboloni, “L’instauration,” 51–52. Reid, “Patrons of Poetry,” 62–66. See also Baldzuhn, “The Companies,” 241.

86 Gally, *Parler d’amour*, 36–37. Gros, *Le poème*, 84–96. Durand, *Chants royaux*, VI–VII. *Petite anthologie*, 368–369, “La feste du Puy honoree.”

87 Hüe, “Esther,” 108, 127. See also Wintroub, *The Voyage of Thought*, 83.

88 Jean Devaux, “Littérature et politique au coeur de la cité: des Puys marials aux chambres de rhétorique,” in *Première poésie française*, 376–381. For examples, Beaurepaire, *Les puy*s, 303–304, 319–320; Gros, *Le poète*, 58; Hüe, “Esther.”

paintings and winning poems and presented it to her in the successful hope of avoiding a planned forced loan. The puy was, literally, representing the city.⁸⁹ It could also provide a voice for more subtle and complex commentary. Katell Lavéant has shown how a comic play performed for the members of the Puy of Amiens in 1473 expressed partisan support for France in its struggle with Burgundy over the region. The winning *chant royal* of the Puy of Douai in 1608 includes a call for peace in “desolated Belgium.”⁹⁰

Through their ability to connect different parts of the elite and their claim to represent the city as a whole, puy could play a role in overcoming the impact of internal and external strife. Carol Symes suggests that, through its performances, the confraternity in Arras helped to mediate among the competing powers jockeying for control in Arras.⁹¹ In London, the foundation of the puy followed a period of civil strife that had seen the city stripped of privileges. They had only just been reinstated, and some of the leading figures in the reconciliation of the city with the monarchy seem to have been involved in founding the puy.⁹² In Caen, the puy was founded shortly after a reformation of the university to resolve internal abuses and external tensions with the city.⁹³ And in Rouen, the foundation of the puy was a response to the changing status of the city and of Normandy within France, while the re-foundation of the puy in 1596 was an attempt to restore the unity of the city’s elite after it has been split between the two warring sides at the end of the Wars of Religion.⁹⁴

10 Conclusion

The puy were unusual in giving people an opportunity to express, in a collective context, an individual voice through the poems they composed. They can thus offer an insight into devotion by relatively ordinary people, as well as a sense of the collective beliefs and opinions of the urban population. They can reveal how confraternity members and their fellow-citizens were thinking, what they were concerned about, and what they wanted to say or felt that they ought to say. Though long neglected, in recent years they have attracted the attention of scholars of literature and art who have begun to unpack their

89 Durand, *Chants royaux*. Devaux, “Littérature et politique,” 373–374. Gomez-Géraud, “Espace et symbole.” Gros, *Le poète*, 70–74.

90 Lavéant, “Personal Expression.” Loys, *Les oeuvres poétiques*, 3: “la Belge desolée.”

91 Symes, *A Common Stage*, 206.

92 Sutton, “Merchants, Music,” 9.

93 Malas Semboloni, “L’instauration,” 48, 50–51.

94 Reid, “Patrons of Poetry,” 38–42, and Reid, “Piety, Poetry and Politics,” 158–163.

potential. Historians of confraternities, however, have barely begun to explore what this unusual type of confraternity can reveal about the history of faith, of specific devotions, of ideas, of patronage, and of civic society. It also seems possible that there are additional examples in France and elsewhere still to be discovered, and further comparisons to be made with confraternities that patronised other cultural endeavours such as theatre, art, and music. There is plenty of ground still to be explored for scholars interested in confraternities that combined devotion with poetry in order to praise the Virgin and build a sense of common purpose in their city. The poets of the puy's await a new audience.

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Iconography, Spectacle, and Notions of Corporate Identity: The Form and Function of Art in Early Modern Confraternities

Alyssa Abraham

1 Introduction

The confraternity of Saint Sebastian was established in Modena on 20 January 1501, on the feast day of Saint Sebastian. According to the foundation legend recorded in the company's statutes, the city had been in the midst of "a plague so deadly that it was not worth it to try any antidotes and, like savage animals, [the citizens] abandoned one another."¹ In an attempt to alleviate the suffering of those afflicted, at nine o'clock that evening the penitent people of Modena gathered together in the church of Santa Maria delle Grazie and processed to the Duomo. Upon their arrival, the people fervently prayed to Christ, the Blessed Virgin, the city's patron saint San Geminiano, and Saint Sebastian to liberate them from the contagion. Their prayers were answered so, for the future prevention of plague, they founded a school and confraternity under the triumphal banner of the martyred knight, Saint Sebastian.²

When first founded, few confraternities had their own exclusive meeting place. Thus, until membership and financial resources grew, *confratelli* practiced their devotions in larger parish churches or convents.³ When a company did acquire a dedicated location, the members would set themselves to embellishing the space in a way that reflected the primary purpose of the society. One of the main goals of confraternity art, therefore, was to assert the group's corporate identity, express its devotional goals, and educate new members about its mission and history. The oratory of the confraternity of Saint Sebastian in Modena, for example, prominently displayed devotional

1 *Modi et capitoli della scola et confraternita del glorioso martirizzato cavalliero Santo Sebastiano della citta de modena* [...], Archivio Capitolare di Modena (ACMO), Confraternita di San Sebastiano, ms. 1(15), fol. 3r; and Matteo Al Kalak, *Gli statuti delle confraternite modenesi dal x al xvi secolo* (Bologna: 2011), 198.

2 *Modi et capitoli*, fol. 3r; and Al Kalak, *Gli statuti delle confraternite*, 199.

3 For a general discussion of the physical locations of confraternities, see Christopher Black, *Italian Confraternities in the Sixteenth Century* (Cambridge: 1989), 234–242.

depictions and narrative scenes of the titular saint that emphasised his efficacy as a deliverer from the effects of the plague. The imagery in the oratory, then, corresponded visually with the foundation legend written in the society's statutes. Even so, communicating long-established corporate goals was only one of the functions of confraternity art. Indeed, brotherhoods retained an impressive assortment of objects for use in their ordinary and extraordinary rituals. Using the confraternity of Saint Sebastian in Modena as a case study, the first part of this article offers an overview of the ways in which the appearance of altarpieces, narrative series, and smaller art objects worked together to support the devotional objectives of the brotherhood during ordinary use of the oratory and during processions.

Other confraternities, on the other hand, underwent dramatic changes to their corporate identity at different points in history. Consequently, the form and function of a sodality's art did not always reflect its initial purpose. The origin of the confraternity of Saint Peter Martyr, for example, can be traced to the flagellant movement of 1260, which saw thousands of pilgrims traverse Italy, scourging themselves and crying out for mercy from heaven. Inspired by their example, in 1261 the citizens of Modena established a flagellant confraternity under the name of Peter of Verona (1205–1252) who, after his death and rapid canonisation, became known as Saint Peter Martyr. In 1273, the relatively new confraternity was entrusted with the administration of one of the city's main hospitals. The confraternity's good works continued until 1542; that year the brothers of Saint Peter Martyr were forced to abandon their work as hospital administrators (*ospedalieri*) when all the city's infirmaries were consolidated under the supervision of the commune (*Comunità*).⁴ From that point on, the confratelli of Saint Peter Martyr shifted their focus from caring for the infirm to providing the community with artfully-constructed devotional spectacles.

Unlike the confraternity of Saint Sebastian, therefore, that of Saint Peter Martyr did not maintain a visual program that communicated the devotional

4 Girolamo Tiraboschi, *Notizie della Confraternita di S. Pietro Martire in Modena* (Modena: 1789), 27. For the consolidation of the hospitals in Modena, see Daniela Grana, *Per una storia della pubblica assistenza a Modena. Modelli e strutture tra '500 e '700* (Modena: 1991); Susanna Peyronel Rambaldi, *Speranze e crisi nel Cinquecento modenese. Tensioni religiose e vita cittadina ai tempi di Giovanni Morone* (Milan: 1979), 147–161; Michelle M. Fontaine, "Organizing Charity and the Dynamic of Heterodoxy: the Santa Unione, Municipal Control, and the Fate of Confraternal Good Works in Sixteenth-Century Modena," in *Confraternite, chiesa e società: aspetti e problemi dell'associazionismo laicale europeo in età moderna e contemporanea*, (ed.) Liana Bertoldi Lenoci (Fasano: 1994), 115–123, and Cesare Santus, "La nascita della Santa Unione e l'assistenza cittadina (1541–1542)," *Atti e Memorie della Deputazione di Storia Patria per le Antiche Provincie Modenesi* 33 (2011): 85–102.

goals and civic duties that had been established at the time of the sodality's foundation. Instead, the brothers reconsidered their role in society and took up the task of developing multi-sensory displays of ephemeral art, music, and performance in order to bring devotional experiences to life. This article concludes by highlighting the ways in which the confratelli of Saint Peter Martyr used their altarpiece, oratory decorations, recitations, and ephemeral displays to assert their new civic role in Post-Tridentine Modena. Examined together, the two confraternities in Modena provide two examples of the ways in which art was employed at least by some early modern brotherhoods and reveal the variety of functions such images and objects could be made to fulfil.

2 The View from Inside the Oratory

Although the foundation story of the confraternity of Saint Sebastian, as noted above, clearly explains the primary devotional focus of the confratelli, very little is known about the setting in which they performed their devotions during the early years of the brotherhood's existence. It is likely that members were permitted to use an altar or chapel located inside one of the city's larger monastic or parish churches, as was the norm for newly-founded sodalities.⁵ On the other hand, we do know that on 13 March 1521 the *Comunità* of Modena granted the brotherhood a plot of land next to the existing church of San Marco just outside the centre of the city. Within a few years, the confratelli had constructed their first oratory, which most likely followed the basic format established in the early 16th century (figs. 20.1).⁶

Originally based on the model of conventual chapter houses, confraternity oratories often took the form of a long rectangular room with an altar installed on the wall at the far end.⁷ Long wooden benches were then placed against the side walls, in such a way as to enable the brothers to face one another when

5 Black, *Italian Confraternities*, 234.

6 Gusmano Soli, *Chiese di Modena* 111 (Modena: 1974), 276; and Archivio di Stato di Modena (ASMo), *Corporazioni soppresse*, Monache di S. Marco (repertorio compilato da Giuseppe Pisa, N. 1874). Soli clarifies that the church of San Marco was located precisely on the corner of the contrada Ganaceto and corso Delle Arti, whereas the land given to the confraternity of San Sebastiano abutted the more northern corner of the block (Ganaceto and Corso Cavour). He makes this distinction to dispel any ideas that the brothers of San Sebastiano would have been granted space inside the church of San Marco, which he points out is a common misconception. Soli, *Chiese di Modena* 11, 355–356.

7 Black, *Italian Confraternities*, 234.

seated.⁸ Sometime benches were also placed against the entrance wall on either side of the door, an example of which can be seen in the oratory of the Gonfalone in Rome.⁹ Since the oratory would be used for a variety of important corporate functions including regular meetings and devotions, theatrical recitations, and public devotional spectacles, the laterally-placed benches enabled the brothers to adapt the space according to their changing needs.

After furnishing the oratory with the indispensable altar and benches, the confratelli could turn their attention to embellishing the walls. Paintings or frescoes occupied the space above the benches on either side of the oratory. Depending on the function of the confraternity, such images could contain subjects of pedagogical or propagandistic use to the brothers.¹⁰ In general, the art on the side walls took the form of a series of canvases or frescoes that featured episodes from the life of the patron saint, scenes from the Old or New Testament, the lives of the Virgin and Christ or, in some Counter-Reformation examples, scenes from Christ's Passion.¹¹ The decorations were designed to reflect and encourage the activities of the confraternity, promote a sense of cohesion, and display the political power of the group.

The level of sophistication of instructional or propagandistic art varied widely among confraternities since the complexity of the images was ultimately determined by the erudition and wealth of the brothers. Nevertheless, the small controlled space of the oratory was especially suited for highly impactful imagery, since members could easily appreciate the scenes from the wooden benches when the space was well-lit for certain occasions.¹² The focal point of the standard oratory, however, was the altar positioned against the wall opposite the entrance. Altar furnishings and decorations varied widely across centuries and regions but, generally speaking, even those brotherhoods that were not particularly wealthy would have had an altarpiece.

8 Soli, *Chiese di Modena* 3:276. Soli also states that "certainly" the construction of the original oratory of San Sebastiano must have been underway by 1525.

9 Francesco Lucantoni, "Historical Notes on the Architecture of Italian Confraternities" *Confraternitas* 17: 2 (Fall 2006), 12.

10 Black, *Italian Confraternities*, 242.

11 The oratory of the Gonfalone in Rome featured a fresco cycle of the Passion of Christ (completed after 1568) that conformed to the needs of the Counter-Reformation. Lucantoni, "Historical Notes on the Architecture of Italian Confraternities," 12.

12 Black, *Italian Confraternities*, 242. Some of the most spectacular surviving examples of oratory decorations can be found in the Venetian *Scuola* of San Rocco, where Tintoretto was commissioned to provide paintings in the late 16th century. The description, analysis, and interpretation of the images have been featured in monographs on the artist and on the relationship of the paintings to their architectural surroundings. See Jozef Grabski, "The Group of paintings by Tintoretto in the "Sala Terrane" in the Scuola di San Rocco in Venice and their relationship to the architecture structure," *Artibus et Historiae* 1.1 (1980), 118.

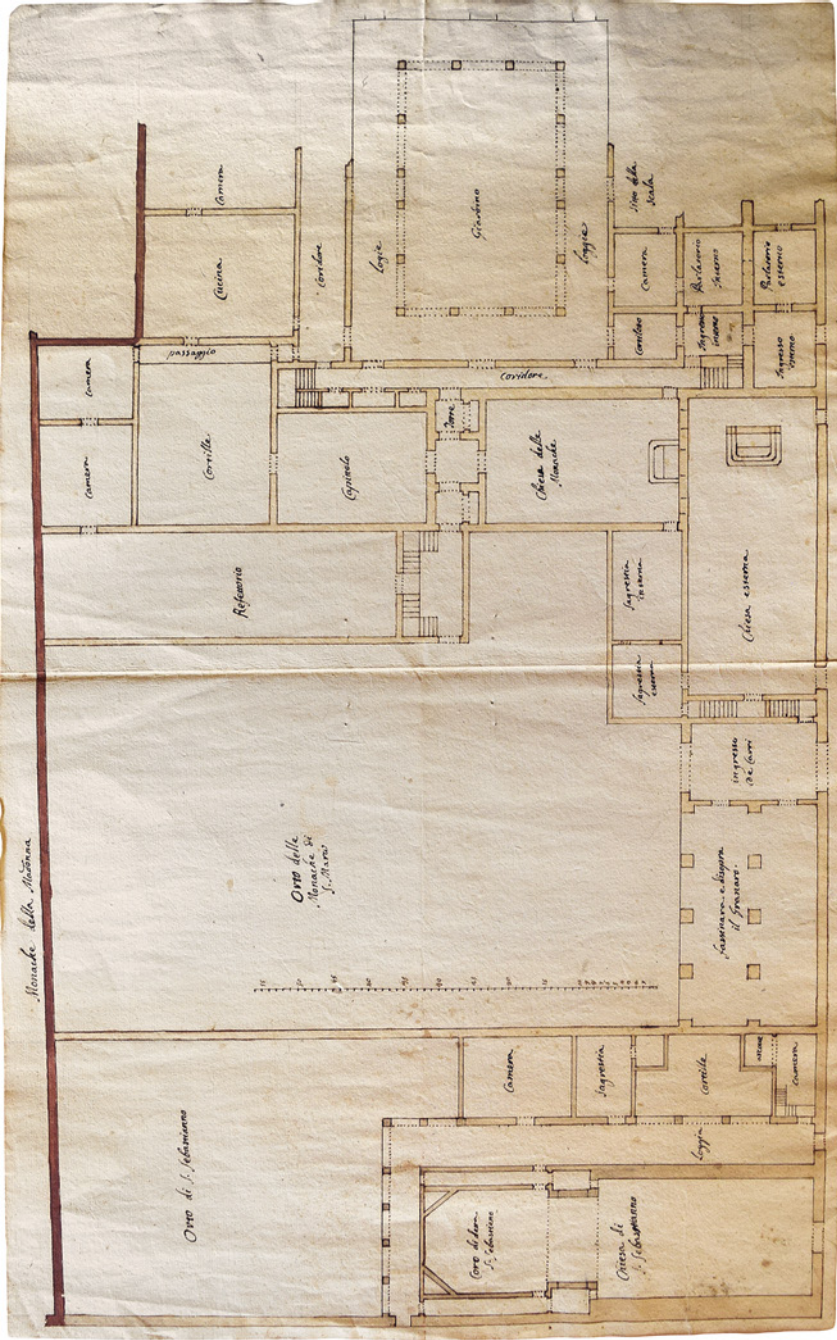


FIGURE 20.1 *Plan of San Marco and San Sebastiano. (After 1632) ASMO, Mappario Estense, Fabbriche, ms. 115.*
PHOTO: ALYSSA ABRAHAM.



FIGURE 20.2 Correggio, *Madonna di San Sebastiano*. (c.1524) Dresden, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister.

© GEMÄLDEGALERIE ALTE MEISTER, STAATLICHE KUNSTSAMMLUNGEN DRESDEN. PHOTO: ELKE ESTEL/ HANS-PETER KLUT.

3 Altarpieces and Wall Paintings in the Oratory of Saint Sebastian

In the 16th century, the most common subject of a confraternity's altarpiece (*ancona*) was the Madonna and Child, who were often enthroned and surrounded by a carefully-selected arrangement of saints. However, the specific appearance and iconography of each altarpiece depended upon the needs and desires of the society that commissioned it.¹³ The confraternity of Saint Sebastian in Modena, for example, commissioned an altarpiece from Antonio Allegri (c.1489–1534), who is most commonly referred to by the name of his hometown of Correggio. The painting, the *Madonna di San Sebastiano* (c.1524, oil on panel, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Dresden; fig. 20.1), was designed to reflect the corporate identity and civic commitment of the brotherhood. Correggio depicted the company's patron saint, Sebastian, on the Virgin's right, with his hands bound to a tree, as he looks up at the Virgin and Child. Saint Roch lies opposite Saint Sebastian, his face shadowed by the cloud that supports the vision of the Virgin. Between them, San Geminiano, the patron saint of Modena, faces Saint Sebastian as he kneels beneath the Virgin. His left hand invites the gaze of the viewer into the scene, as his right hand directs that gaze up toward the Holy Mother. In a way that reinforces his role as mediator between the natural and supernatural realms, San Geminiano looks over his left shoulder, making eye contact with the spectator.

Above the trio of saints, and seated on a shadowy mass of clouds, the Virgin directs her gaze lovingly and protectively down toward the patron saint of Modena, whereas the Christ Child seems to gaze toward Saint Sebastian and the model of Modena offered by the wingless angel at the feet of the saint. The confraternity's patron saint, therefore, receives the grace of Christ on behalf of the brothers, while San Geminiano performs a similar function as the recipient of grace on behalf of the city. The intercessors engage with one another and with the viewer in a way that encourages prayer and meditation, which would, in turn, guarantee the continuous heavenly protection against one of the most terrifying threats that faced society. In fact, the inclusion of Saint Roch, who

13 A particularly useful study of the functional iconography of confraternity altarpieces is Michelle O'Malley's article, "Altarpieces and Agency: The Altarpiece of the Society of the Purification and its 'Invisible Skein of Relations.'" Inspired by the work of Alfred Gell, O'Malley provides a critical methodology for not only deciphering the iconographical meaning of the figures in a confraternity's altarpiece, but also demonstrates the ways in which the presence of those figures can reveal valuable information about the complex relationships between civic, social, or religious figures and the society. See Michelle O'Malley, "Altarpieces and Agency: The Altarpiece of the Society of the Purification and its 'Invisible Skein of Relations'" *Art History* 28.4 (2005): 416–441; and Alfred Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory* (Oxford: 1998).

was a popular choice for plague imagery, strongly reinforces the devotional function of the altarpiece as a prophylactic image against deadly disease.

The brothers of Saint Sebastian would have installed their altarpiece by Correggio on the altar of their newly-constructed oratory in about 1525, where it served as the primary focal point for devotion. The painting most likely remained there for about a century, until the existing structure was sold to the neighbouring nuns of Saint Mark in 1621 and subsequently demolished. The confratelli moved quickly to build a new meeting place; on 21 September 1621, they asked the *Comunità* for license to build their new oratory.¹⁴ Instead of replicating the previous structure, however, the brothers added a presbytery and a large, octagonal choir. According to the document they sent to the *Comunità*, the additions were necessary in order to provide the confratelli with a private space to conduct their routines when the oratory was occupied by the newly-formed Compagnia del Suffragio dei Morti, which had been created on behalf of the duchess of Modena in 1620.¹⁵ The new company was given license to conduct funeral rites inside the oratory of Saint Sebastian and to have a side altar constructed for their exclusive use. Although members of the confraternity of Saint Sebastian found it inconvenient to share their oratory, they nevertheless took advantage of the occasion to build a more accommodating environment and to commission a new series of paintings for the side walls. In addition, the confratelli were able to exert some influence regarding the subject matter of the altarpiece of the Suffragio, which prominently features Saint Sebastian.

To furnish their new altar, the members of the company of the Suffragio commissioned an altarpiece from the Baroque painter, Bernardino Cervi (1586–1630). Completed in about 1625, *The Virgin and Saint Sebastian Intercede with the Holy Trinity on Behalf of the Souls in Purgatory* (oil on canvas, Chiesa di Santa Maria della Pomposa, Modena; fig. 20.3) reflects the purpose of the Suffragio as a company dedicated to the deliverance of the dead from the sufferings of purgatory. On the right side of the painting, Saint Sebastian stands awkwardly with his knees bent in a cloud placed just below the one that carries the Father and Son. With his right hand at his breast in a gesture of pleading, he gazes adoringly up at the Holy Trinity. In his left hand, Sebastian delicately holds several arrows, alluding to his martyrdom. Mary kneels in the cloud opposite Sebastian and looks up toward the Trinity while she gestures down toward the souls in purgatory, some of whom are being helped out of the darkness by two angels. Mary and Sebastian, therefore, are depicted as the primary intercessors who help bring the souls sent to purgatory into paradise.

14 ASCMO, *Partiti Comunali*, 20 e 24 settembre 1621; ASCMO, *Atti della Comunità*, 20 settembre 1621.

15 Soli, *Chiese di Modena* 3:278–279.



FIGURE 20.3 Bernardino Cervi, *The Virgin and Saint Sebastian Intercede with the Holy Trinity on Behalf of the Souls in Purgatory*. (1625) Modena, Church of Santa Maria della Pomposa.

PHOTO: ALYSSA ABRAHAM.

At about the same time, a series of canvases depicting the *Life of Saint Sebastian* was commissioned to decorate the walls of the oratory.¹⁶ Although the exact authorship of the paintings is unknown, traditionally they have been attributed to Bernardino Cervi, who painted the altarpiece for the Compagnia del Suffragio, as mentioned above.¹⁷ Of the six paintings that comprise the series today, it is certain that four of them were displayed on the walls of the 1622 oratory, probably with one on either side of Cervi's altarpiece for the Suffragio, and two on the facing wall. The four episodes most likely to have been on display in the 17th century are: *Saint Sebastian being led out for Execution*, *The Martyrdom by Arrows*, *The Recovery of Saint Sebastian by Saint Irene and Holy Women*, and *Saint Sebastian Beaten to Death* (oil on canvas, Church of Santa Maria della Pomposa, Modena). The scenes described as *Saint Sebastian Visiting the Incarcerated Saints Marco and Marcellino* and *Saint Sebastian Receives the Title of the Commandant of the Praetorian Guard* are inconsistent with the other four in terms of style and technique. Consequently, those two scenes are believed to have been painted in the 18th century. Nevertheless, whether the series was displayed in the oratory in four parts or six, the episodes from the *Life of Saint Sebastian* supported the message of the high altar and that of the Suffragio, expanding upon the iconography of the saint. Therefore, the artworks inside the 1622 oratory of Saint Sebastian in Modena worked together to assert the corporate identity of the confraternity, educate its members and visitors, and provide a visual focus for devotional exercises. Alone, Correggio's altarpiece functioned devotionally as a powerful prophylactic image against the plague, but the repetition of his image in another prominent altarpiece would have amplified his role as a protector by providing devotees with an additional mode of intercession. Similarly, the narrative series on the side walls educated visitors about the life of this powerful, plague-fighting saint, thereby authorizing his power as an intercessor.

4 Smaller Works of Art for Saint Sebastian

The image of a confraternity's patron saint was most prominently featured on oratory walls and on the altars, as we have seen in the case of the confraternity of Saint Sebastian. Yet, a society's patron saint was also seen in smaller objects

16 Soli, *Chiese di Modena* 2:495. These paintings have not been studied in great detail, but they still exist in the church of Santa Maria della Pomposa in Modena, where the confraternity of Saint Sebastian now resides.

17 A. Lugni, "Bernardino Cervi," in *L'arte degli Estensi: La pittura del Seicento e del Settecento a Modena e Reggio* (Modena: 1986), 111.

and furnishings. These works of art can be found listed in inventories in various shapes and sizes, in addition to many other objects of devotional and liturgical use. An inventory dated 6 January 1675 shows that the confraternity of Saint Sebastian owned a number of paintings, sculptures, and other furnishings that were used to decorate the oratory, presbytery, and choir of the second oratory.

A small portrait of Saint Sebastian and other objects with his likeness are also recorded in the inventory, including a lectern in the centre of the choir, upon which the saint was featured with "his most admirable ornamentation."¹⁸ Even so, the objects were not restricted to representations of Saint Sebastian alone. Indeed, a variety of subjects are documented, including a small unframed painting of a crowned female martyr with a hand at her breast, a framed image of the Madonna, a smaller portrait of an unknown crowned saint, a larger scene of the Annunciation with its frame, and a framed image of Saint Francis.¹⁹ This small sampling represents a much longer list of similar objects, some of which may have been acquired through unsolicited donations to the confraternity.²⁰

In addition to the collection of small paintings, the brotherhood also retained a number of small sculptures that were designed to accompany their devotional rites. In the 1675 inventory, many of these objects were clearly identified by form and function. For example, objects listed for use on the altar include eight gilded angels, four golden and six silver eagles, and two standing Madonna statuettes, one of which was made of stucco and crowned with a diadem.²¹ Objects of this nature were likely used in the oratory on certain feast days in order to draw attention to the altar and to underscore the importance of the rituals taking place.

Although the smaller objects often receive less scholarly attention than altarpieces, they were precious to their owners who used and maintained them for generations. For example, an inventory from 1758 lists many of the same objects noted above, with some additions. In the 18th century, the confraternity

18 1675 *Inventario delle Robe della Confraternita di S. Sebastiano di Modena*, ASMO, *Soppressioni*, ms. 1306, fol. 1r.

19 1675 *Inventario*, ms. in ASMO, *Soppressioni*, ms. 1306, fol. 2r.

20 Konrad Eisenbichler, *The Boys of the Archangel Raphael: A Youth Confraternity in Florence, 1411–1785* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 266. It was not unusual for a brotherhood to receive an entire collection of small objects and works of art from other sodalities that had closed. In some cases, the recipients would adapt the imagery of donated objects to correspond with their company's iconographical program. Konrad Eisenbichler, "The Acquisition of Art in a Florentine Youth Confraternity," in *Confraternities and the Visual Arts in Renaissance Italy: Ritual, Spectacle, Image*, (eds.) Barbara Wisch and Diane Cole Ahl (Cambridge, UK: 2000), 102–116: 105.

21 1675 *Inventario*, ASMO, *Soppressioni*, ms. 1306, fol. 1v.

of Saint Sebastian also recorded the presence of a copper relief of “The Martyr” Saint Sebastian and four copper medallions depicting the arms of the saint “and red ribbons for the clerics.”²² The 1758 inventory also lists an addition to the permanent decorations of the choir: a wooden sculpture of the Madonna and Child positioned above the seat of the *ordinario*.²³

Confraternities also possessed a number of books that they regularly used for record-keeping, reference, and for the recitation of offices. Some of these texts were highly valuable, and were embellished with tooled leather, burnished corner pieces, metal bosses, and finely-tooled clasps.²⁴ The pages of song books and Bibles could also be extensively illuminated and embossed with gold-leaf, and even confraternity statutes were sometimes splendidly decorated. In his book on the Florentine youth confraternity of the Archangel Raphael, Konrad Eisenbichler noted that the 1468 *Capitoli* features gold-leafed illumination bordering the second folio, and a small rendering of the Madonna and Child in the bottom left-hand corner.²⁵ Miniatures of the Archangel Raphael and Tobias can also be found among the society’s documents where they served to affirm the group’s association with the archangel.²⁶

The manuscript of the statutes of the confraternity of Saint Sebastian in Modena contains some small illustrations, although they may be better classified as devices and initials rather than illuminations. The verso of the first folio contains a passage, written in the form of an inverted triangle, that provides the usual introductory information regarding the date and circumstances of the company’s foundation. A pen-flourished initial executed in iron gall ink and delicately accented with red begins the passage, which ends with a device in the form of a ribbon containing the words *Solo in Sole, Solum Salus* (Salvation only by the Sun). Underneath the ribbon device is a red anagram of the letters S, O, and L, which are layered over one another and embellished with thin intertwining lines and flourishes.

On the facing page, Saint Sebastian stands to the left of the opening lines, forming the stem of the historiated initial T. A horizontal tree branch meets the top of Sebastian’s halo, comprising the cross-stroke of the letter (fig. 20.4). The body of the saint has been rendered in a relaxed contrapposto pose, with his arms held or tied behind his back as he looks at the reader with a bright

22 1578 *Inventario delle argenterie, mobili, ed altro di ragione della Venerabile Confraternita di San Sebastiano*, ASMO, *Soppressioni*, ms. 1306, fol. 2r.

23 1758 *Inventario*, ASMO, *Soppressioni*, ms. 1306, fol. 3v.

24 1758 *Inventario*, ASMO, *Soppressioni*, ms. 1306, fol. 2r. The confraternity of Saint Sebastian, for example, lists a book covered in black velvet and accented with gold.

25 Eisenbichler, *The Boys of the Archangel Raphael*, 96–97.

26 Eisenbichler, *The Boys of the Archangel Raphael*, 263; frontispiece, and fig. 5.

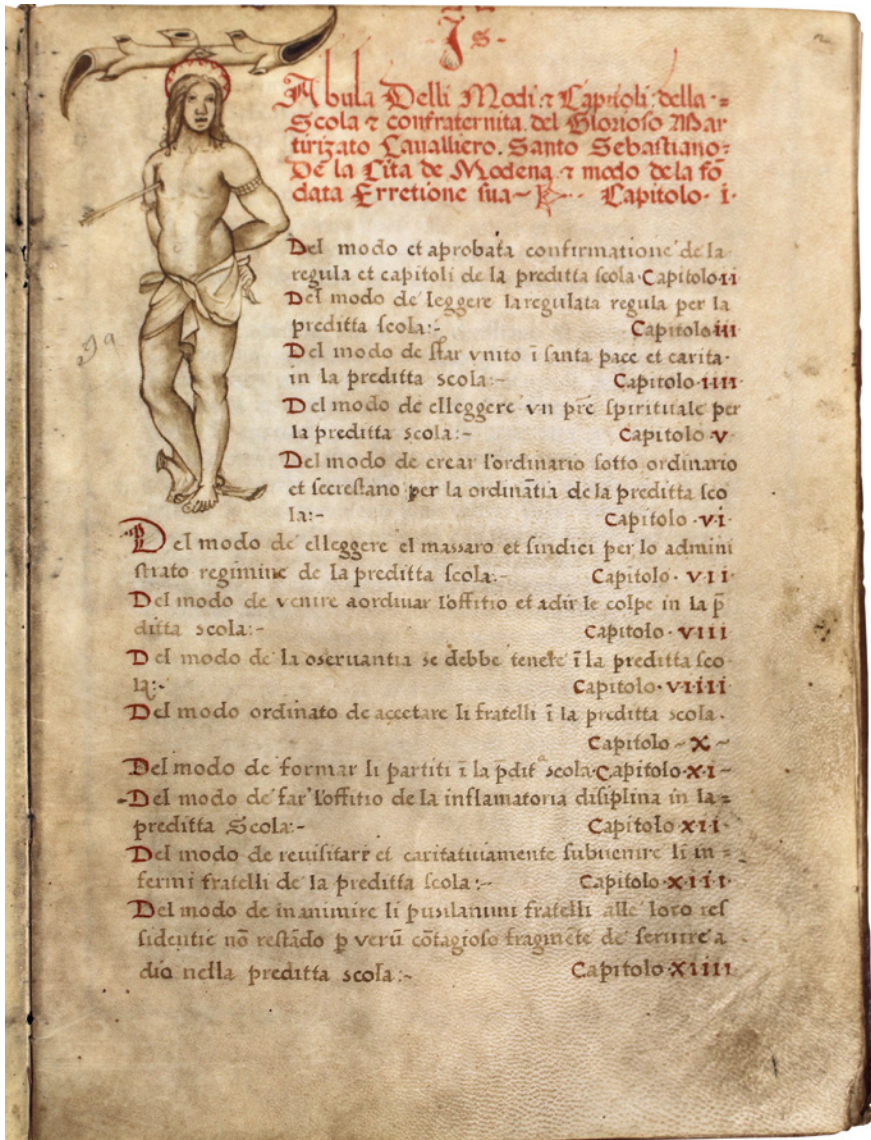


FIGURE 20.4 *Tabula delli modi et capitoli della scola et confraternita del glorioso martirizzato cavalliero santo Sebastiano*, in *Statuti della confraternita di San Sebastiano*, ACMO, Confraternita di San Sebastiano, ms. 1(15), fol. 2r.
PHOTO: ALYSSA ABRAHAM.

expression on his face. A single arrow is embedded in his right breast, and his head is surrounded by a halo outlined in red. The drawing was completed in the same ink used to write the lines of text, and occupies nearly half the height of the page. Including such a large historiated initial at the beginning of the

statutes of Saint Sebastian reinforced the society's primary devotional purpose by providing a firm association between the iconography—repeated on the walls and altars of the oratory—and the statutes.

5 Objects on the Move: Processional *Gonfaloni* and Crucifixes

The visual language of a confraternity was not confined to the interior of its oratory. Processions organised by lay societies were seen as contributions to civic and religious life and were performed frequently in the streets of early modern cities. Feast days, Holy Thursday, and Corpus Christi are only some of the occasions that could be celebrated with a procession.²⁷ Confraternities used these opportunities to assert their corporate identity to members of the public. Brothers would dress in cloaks that identified their society by means of colour and insignia, and carried banners, paintings, relics (often under a decorated baldachin), and crucifixes throughout the streets of their city.²⁸ The inventory of Saint Sebastian indicates that the brothers maintained a collection of objects for use during their processions, including two embroidered representations of their saint, each surrounded by an engraved and gilded wood frame. Mounted to the tops of wooden shafts, the brothers would hold the images aloft as they walked through the streets, signalling their presence and identifying their devotional purpose. During certain processions, the confratelli would also parade with the relics of the Holy Cross, sheltered under a black velvet baldachin. The public would be able to catch glimpses of the relic through the delicate golden fringe that bordered the edges of the canopy.²⁹

Banners like those recorded in the inventory of Saint Sebastian belong to a category of confraternal art known as *gonfaloni*, which identified a confraternity to members of the public during ritual processions. Unfortunately, these

27 On the various processions at and by the youth confraternity of the Archangel Raphael in Florence, see Eisenbichler, *The Boys of the Archangel Raphael*, 167–179. See also Monica Poisa “La processione del Corpus Domini a Brescia nei secoli xv e xvi,” *Civiltà bresciana* 8:2 (1999): 73–105; Barbara Wisch, “The Roman Church Triumphant: Pilgrimage, Penance and Processions Celebrating the Holy Year of 1575,” in “*All the world's a stage...*” *Art and Pageantry in the Renaissance and Baroque*, (eds.) Barbara Wisch and Susan Scott Munshower (University Park, PA: 1990), 2:82–117; Danilo Zardin, “Le confraternite in processione,” in *Il teatro a Milano nel Settecento*, (eds.) Annamaria Cascetta, Giovanna Zanlonghi (Milan: 2008), 1161–191. For confraternity processions in Spain, see Susan Verdi Webster, *Art and Ritual in Golden-Age Spain. Sevillian Confraternities and the Processional Sculpture of Holy Week* (Princeton: 1998).

28 Black, *Italian Confraternities*, 109.

29 1675 *Inventario*, ASMO, *Soppressioni*, ms. 1306, fol. 1v.

objects rarely survive for a number of reasons, not least of which being the materials from they were constructed. Because they were designed for ease of mobility, processional banners tended to be made of lightweight textiles such as canvas or silk, which are susceptible to damage during use and to decay while in storage. Nevertheless, *gonfaloni* were a central part of confraternal visual culture, so much so that the appearance, iconography and use of surviving examples have gained some scholarly attention in recent years.³⁰

In addition to *gonfaloni*, brotherhoods also retained one or more crucifixes for use in processions. Whereas many examples intended for use inside the oratory could be heavy and constructed from expensive materials—such as the engraved silver cross with gold filigree noted in the 1675 inventory of Saint Sebastian—those used in procession were typically constructed to be much lighter and, thus, more portable.³¹ Four crucifixes of this type were noted in the inventories of Saint Sebastian, including an example made of stucco with a red cross, a smaller version of the same, and two additional wooden crosses.³²

In some cases, processional items were at the centre of fierce rivalries between companies. In the late 16th and early 17th centuries, the flagellant confraternities (known as *casacce*) in Genoa and other towns in Liguria, competed with one another to create the most magnificent processional items, including large and extremely heavy crucifixes, richly-ornamented lanterns, and

30 For some of the most recent studies on processional banners, see David Franklin, "Signorelli's Banner and its Frame for the Confraternity of St. Anthony Abbot in Sansepolcro" *The Burlington Magazine* 152.1289 (August 2010), 512–516; Jessica N. Richardson, "The Brotherhood of Saint Leonard and Saint Francis: Banners, Sacred Topography and Confraternal Identity in Assisi" *Art History* 34.5 (2011), 884–913; Eveline Baseggio Omiccioli, "Paolo Farinati's Design for the Banner of the Confraternity of the Artillerymen in Verona" *Master Drawings* 50.1 (2012), 65–70; Andrea Dehmer, *Painted Processional Banners of Religious Lay Confraternities in Northern and Central Italy from their Beginnings Until the Era of Counter-Reformation* (M.A. Thesis, University of Regensburg, Germany, 1999); Andrea Dehmer, *Italienische Bruderschaftsbanner des Mittelalters und der Renaissance*. (Italienische Forschungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz Max-Planck-Institut, I Mandorli, 4). Munich: 2004; Victor M. Schmidt, "Gli standardi processionali su tavola nelle Marche del Quattrocento," in *I Da Varano e le arti*, (eds.) Andrea De Marchi and Pier Luigi Falaschi (Ripatransone: 2003), 551–578.

31 *1675 Inventario*, ASMO, *Soppressioni*, ms. 1306, fol. 2r.

32 The stucco crucifix with red cross is listed in the 1675 and 1740 inventories, indicating that it was maintained and used over the course of several generations of brothers. The smaller version and two wooden crosses are listed in the 1740 inventory. *1675 Inventario*, ASMO, *Soppressioni*, ms. 1306, fol. 1v; and *1740 Inventario, in cui notate sono le robe appartenenti al Sagristano pro tempore della Confraternita di S. Sebastiano*, ASMO, *Soppressioni*, ms. 1306, fol. 1r.

wooden sculptures by famous artists.³³ They were also known for their ostentatious cloaks featuring such elongated trains that they had to be carried by attendants.³⁴ The processions of the *casacce*, however, were most famous for the enormous crucifixes made of tortoise shell and embossed with gold and silver that were carried along the processional route. Citizens would flock to the streets to marvel at the strong young men as they passed the crucifixes between one another with great dexterity and skill.³⁵

6 Art in the Streets: Saint Peter Martyr's Theatrical Procession for Corpus Domini

In addition to laudatory and flagellant processions, public events could also take the form of recitations performed from something resembling a mobile theatre set. For example, after being forced to relinquish control of the city's hospital, the confratelli of Saint Peter Martyr (est. 1261) in Modena turned their attention to performing public devotional spectacles, as mentioned above. In 1573, they gained particular notoriety for their elaborate Corpus Domini procession that represented the Counter-Reformation triumph of the Catholic Church.³⁶ The event was entitled "The Foundation of the Holy Church" and was, thematically, an enactment from Dante Alighieri's *Divine Comedy*, in which the poet witnessed a pageant of religious imagery in the Earthly Paradise (*Purg.* 29).³⁷ The focal point of the spectacle was a carriage on two wheels that had been fashioned like

33 Claudio Bernardi, "Corpus Domini: Ritual Metamorphoses and Social Changes in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Genoa," in *The Politics of Ritual Kinship: Confraternities and Social Order in Early Modern Italy*, (ed.) Nicholas Terpstra, 228–242 (Cambridge: 2000), 240. See also the richly illustrated set *La Liguria delle Casacce. Devozione, arte, storia delle confraternite liguri*, (ed.) Fausta Franchini Guelfi. 2 vols (Genoa: 1982); and Fulvio Cervini, "Crocifissi lignei del xv e del xvi secolo nella Liguria occidentale. Una ricerca in corso." *Confraternitas* 6:1 (1995): 26–28.

34 Bernardi, "Corpus Domini," 240.

35 Bernardi, "Corpus Domini," 240.

36 For Corpus Domini processions that included theatrical performances, see, for example, Ralph Blasting, "Processional Staging and the Künzelsau Corpus Christi Play" *Essays in Theatre / Etudes Théâtrales* 11:2 (1993): 145–152; Alexandra F. Johnston, "The Guild of Corpus Christi and the Procession of Corpus Christi in York," *Mediaeval Studies* 38 (1976) 372–384.

37 *Libro delle congregazioni che incomincia dal 1537 sino al 1603*, ACMO, *San Pietro Martire*, ms. 6(10)C, fols. 11v–12r: 21 maggio 1573; and Marta Lucchi, "La tradizione musicale a Modena: Mondo confraternite, liturgia e fermenti d'innovazione (secoli xv–xvi)," in *Il Laudario dei disciplinati: Preghiere, invocazioni e laude dei confratelli modenensi nei secoli xv–xvi*, (eds.) Matteo Al Kalak et al. (Modena: 2005), 36–39.

a white boat to symbolise the Church. A griffon with the golden features of an eagle and flesh-like features of a lion conducted the boat from the prow, and was meant as an allusion to the hypostatic union of Jesus Christ as God and Man. The symbols of the Evangelists decorated the sides of the boat, each shown with six wings and a laurel crown. A woman dressed in red with a green cape sat in the middle of the boat, personifying Christian Theology. Behind her in the stern, an old man leaned against a book as if asleep, representing Saint John the Evangelist. Among those processing with the carriage, were costumed women symbolizing the Theological and Cardinal Virtues, seven angels with lit candelabras to symbolise the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit and the Sacraments of the Church, and twenty-four old men who represented each of the twenty-four books of the Bible. Finally, saints Peter, Paul, Steven, Luke, and the four Doctors of the Church all followed behind the carriage.³⁸

Upon the procession's arrival at the Duomo, the woman in the boat sang a song that explained the symbolism depicted on and around the carriage. The verses had been printed and distributed throughout the city that same morning to enable literate citizens to join the singers, an action that demonstrates how the confratelli actively strove to include the assembly of the faithful. According to the confraternity's chronicle, the combination of visual symbolism and recited verse was a great success, and resulted in "such a rare and harmonious music of voices and instruments, that no greater recreation could ever have been made in all of the city."³⁹ The Corpus Domini procession of 1573 reveals the complexity of visual symbolism sought by the confratelli in their public rituals, and shows that the brothers laboured to ensure that spectators could be included to the fullest extent possible.⁴⁰

7 Theatre, Art, and Devotion inside the Oratory of Saint Peter Martyr

In the years following the Corpus Domini procession of 1573, the confratelli of Saint Peter Martyr began to earn a reputation for the devotional *rappresentazioni* they held within their oratory.⁴¹ Each display combined ephemeral

38 *Libro delle congregazioni*, fols. 11v–12r.

39 *Libro delle congregazioni*, fols. 11v–12r.

40 David Ekserdjian discussed the Corpus Domini procession of 1573 in order to demonstrate that the confratelli possessed a high level of learning, which, according to him, contributed to the composition of Correggio's *Madonna di San Giorgio*. However, the painting by Correggio was commissioned approximately 50 years prior to the elaborate procession of 1573. David Ekserdjian, *Correggio* (New Haven: 1997), 189.

41 Tiraboschi, *Notizie della Confraternita di S. Pietro Martire in Modena*, 41. I use *rappresentazione* and *apparato* interchangeably to refer to the devotional displays designed

architecture, symbolic imagery, edifying epitaphs, music, and recited verse to stimulate a deeply devotional experience for an educated audience.⁴² The confraternity's chronicle not only describes the appearance of their extraordinary events, but also the ways in which the public reacted to them. A particularly touching example was recorded on 9 April 1574:

A very beautiful devotion was held in the *scola* of our company at the time of the offices for Holy Week. This was a representation of the Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ, recited within a mysterious scene of junipers, cypress trees and other greenery, with palaces, towers, crenelated towers, houses, and streets all artfully divided and constructed, which was not only very beautiful, but amazing. The characters included an astrologer, a shepherd, two sibyls, Saint John, the Madonna, two Marys, and an angel. It was performed in three acts [...] after each one [there was] an intermission, during which time a nocturne from the offices was sung. At the end of the recitation a curtain fell, and the Crucifix was shown, [indicating] the conclusion of all the mysteries and topics presented, which moved everyone tenderly and made them cry. It was recited on two nights, with so many people in attendance that it was a wonder [to behold]. Both gentlemen and gentlewomen were in attendance, and [the occasion] was universally deemed to be delightful by everyone since everything went together so well. The stage set, decorated with the most dignified colours and most artful lights was no less beautiful than the naturalism of the performers and the neat and polished discourses that fit very well with what they were talking about and that, in the end, they showed. The representation was devised and composed by a most beloved brother of the company.⁴³

by the confratelli. These words are used in a similar manner throughout their archival documents.

42 For an introduction to the development of *rappresentazioni* in Italy, see Cyrilla Barr, "From *Devozione* to *Rappresentazione*: Dramatic Elements in the Holy Week *Laude* of Assisi," in *Crossing the Boundaries, Christian Piety and the Arts in Italian Medieval and Renaissance Confraternities*, (ed.) Konrad Eisenbichler (Kalamazoo: 1991), 11–32; Giovanni Attolini, *Teatro e spettacolo nel Rinascimento* (Bari: 1988); and Cesare Molinari, *Spettacoli fiorentini del Quattrocento: Contributi allo studio delle Sacre Rappresentazioni* (Venice: 1961). For a broader summary of the tradition in Europe see Lynette R. Muir, *The Biblical Drama of Medieval Europe* (Cambridge: 1995).

43 *Libro delle congregazioni*, fol. 13r: "Si fece una molto bella divocione, nella scola della nostra compagnia, nel tempo delli officii della settimana santa, e questa fu una rappresentacione della Passione di nostro Signore Gesu Christo, in modo di recitacione ove si fece una misteriosa scena di ginepri, cipressi, et altre verdure, con pallazzi, torre, merlature, case, et contrade molto artificiosamente compartite, et fabricate cosa che rendeva non

From the passage cited above, it is clear that the brothers appreciated the public's positive response to their recitation. They took pride in the harmony they achieved between the fine quality of the performances and the artful construction of the setting. Fusing the ephemeral imagery of the stage set with music and verse struck a strong chord with the people of Modena and seems to have encouraged the brothers to organise regular spectacles. In 1575, for example, the brothers organised a devotional experience that exemplified their creative use of a variety of sensory methods to draw spectators into a devotional state. This time, they assigned their highly-prized—and jealously-guarded—altarpiece as the focal point.

Like the confraternity of Saint Sebastian, that of Saint Peter Martyr in Modena had commissioned an altarpiece from Correggio, which they installed in their oratory in about 1530. The painting, known as the *Madonna di San Giorgio* (c.1530, oil on panel, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Dresden; fig. 20.5), is thematically considered a *Virgin and Child Enthroned with Saints*, which is a variation of the established *sacra conversazione* altarpiece.⁴⁴ Once installed on the altar, the painting by Correggio began its life as a devotional object designed to bring a viewer into closer communion with God through the intercession of the depicted saints and the Blessed Virgin and Child.

Seated on an elevated pedestal, Mary holds the infant Jesus as he reaches to her right toward the patron saint of Modena, San Geminiano, who supports a model of the city. At the same time, Mary looks down and to her left at the titular saint of the confraternity, Saint Peter Martyr, who adoringly returns her gaze. In front of San Geminiano, at the Virgin's right, Saint John the Baptist turns back to look at the spectator as he bends his right arm to point at the Virgin and Child. On the other side of the composition, Saint George rests his left foot on the head of the recently-slain dragon while he too gazes over his shoulder at the viewer. Between the two foremost saints, four putti play with the armour and weapons of Saint George. The group of saints and enthroned

manca vaghezza, che stupore. Erano gli recittanti un'Astrologo, uno pastore, due Sibille, San Giovanni, la Madonna, Due Marie, et uno Angelo: fu di tre atti, secondo che gli officii sono tre Notturni, perche si rappresentava uno atto, et per intermedio si cantava uno notturno dell'officio, et in fine della recittazione, cadeva una coltrina et si mostrava il Crocifisso, come conclusione di tutti i misterii, et ragionamenti trattati, cosa che rendeva una tenerissima divocione a tutti, et occasione di lacrime. Si recitto due notte con tanto concorso di populo che fu una maraviglia. Si di gentilhuomini, come di gentildonne, et diletto generalmente a tutti perche tutte le cose corrispondeano, non fu men bella la scena di dignissimi colori freggiata, et di artificiosi lumi adornata, di quello che fosse la naturalita de recittanti et di tersi et polliti ragionamenti accomodati molto a quello che acenavano, et che alla fine mostravano. Fu di quella inventore, et compositore un'amorevole fratello della Compagnia."

44 Ekserdjian, *Correggio*, 189.



FIGURE 20.5 Correggio, *Madonna di San Giorgio*. (c.1530) Dresden, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister.

© GEMÄLDEGALERIE ALTE MEISTER, STAATLICHE KUNSTSAMMLUNGEN DRESDEN. PHOTO: ELKE ESTEL/HANS-PETER KLUT.

Madonna and Child are all placed under a sharply cropped cupola in front of an arch that opens to a view of a landscape.

The iconography of the saints reinforces and draws attention to the corporate identity of the confraternity, and secures its presence in the city of

Modena. For example, the depiction of San Geminiano holding the model of Modena references the confraternity's civic responsibilities and its ties to the community. Beyond the iconography of the painting, however, the gestures, glances, and poses all work together to include the spectator in the scene, bringing him or her into closer proximity with the Virgin and Christ. From her position above the standing saints and jocular putti, the Madonna, through her gaze, showers her attention on the titular saint of the confraternity, and through him, the worshipper.

In addition to the composition and iconography, however, the architectural setting of the scene also encourages the viewer's presence within the fictional space of the altarpiece: the radical cropping of the dome at the top implies his or her occupation of the space below. At the bottom of the painting, the putti's truncated legs and the dragon's clipped nose insist upon an intimate viewpoint, which can only draw the spectator nearer to the throne of the Virgin. The confraternity's records meticulously document how the altarpiece was incorporated into the richly symbolic displays, suggesting that the brethren were not only aware of the transitive visual cues in the painting, but also used those cues to further their devotional goals.⁴⁵ The brothers used the ephemeral display to draw the devotee physically nearer to the altarpiece and, at the same time, to educate him or her about the significance of its contents, reinforce Church doctrine, and encourage contemplative devotion.

An example of such a display took place on 6 November 1575, when the brothers of Saint Peter Martyr recorded that an *apparato* had been made for the occasion of a *Quarant'ore*, or Forty-Hour devotion.⁴⁶ The confratelli

45 For the transitive function of altarpieces, see John Shearman, *Only Connect: Art and the Spectator in the Italian Renaissance* (Princeton: 1992).

46 *Libro delle congregazioni*, ms. 6/10 C, fol. 17r, 6 November 1575. Black describes the practice of the *Quarant'ore* as "the most elaborate presentation of the Host [in which] the sacrament was displayed prominently for forty hours or so, either continuously, or over three days with the chapel closed overnight." It was meant to promote Eucharistic devotion, and included an organized succession of people who performed adoration and prayer, in addition to listening to planned homilies. Although the most extravagant examples of the *Quarant'ore* devotions were organized in cathedrals or larger parish churches, similarly-elaborate spectacles were also performed by confraternities, especially during the Counter Reformation. For example, the confraternity of S. Maria della Morte in Bologna recorded a "sumptuous" illustration of the altar decorations for their *Quarant'ore* devotion that took place on 3 March 1597. The alcove behind their altar featured a perspective scene, and the ceiling was draped with blue veils and roses to "stupendous effect" and the balustrade near the altar was outfitted with angels, lights and mirrors, all surrounded by swags of coloured drapery, gold, and flowers. See Black, *Italian Confraternities in the Sixteenth Century*, 99. For the role of the *Quarant'ore* devotion in youth confraternities, see Eisenbichler, *The Boys of the Archangel Raphael*, 163–164.

planned a careful arrangement of ephemeral architecture, candles, symbolic imagery, and edifying phrases to spiritually engage visitors in the devotion. Seeking to remove any visual distractions from their highly symbolic additions to the oratory, the confratelli first obscured all of the surrounding permanent decorations and furniture with black cloth. By concealing the walls and furniture, they created an entirely blank canvas upon which they could display their *apparato*, guaranteeing the spectator's complete focus upon the ephemeral imagery and altarpiece. Upon entering the oratory, then, a visitor would have seen a large candelabrum and three lamps suspended from the ceiling within a darkened space. Then, placed about six *braccia* (roughly 3.8 metres) in front of the high altar, one would have found a partition that opened in the centre, creating a doorway.⁴⁷ The walls of the barrier were made of the "thinnest veil" and the entire device was referred to as the "chapel completely covered in black."⁴⁸ When observing the partition, a devotee would have also seen two emblems that had been placed above it: one referred to the body of Christ, and the other to his blood. Furthermore, two small lamps hung from the rafters just above the entrance to the ephemeral chapel space beyond the partition, illuminating two life-sized sculptures of Old Testament prophets on either side of the curtained doorway.⁴⁹ One prophet bore the inscription, *vere tu es Deus absconditus* (Isaiah 45:15, "Truly you are a God who hides"), whereas the other's epitaph read, *Nisi credideritis non intelligetis* (Isaiah 7:9, "Unless you believe, you will not understand").⁵⁰ Finally, the doorway of the ephemeral chapel had been covered by a fine black veil, through which a spectator could see only the lights beyond.

Drawing back the curtain in the doorway, one would have observed two black "wings," or curtains, attached at one end to the sides of the partition, and at the other to the walls of the oratory, on either side of the *ancona*, "giving it great majesty."⁵¹ Forming two black diagonal walls, the drapes beyond the partition blocked out any decorations behind and to the sides of the altar, creating a temporary triangular chapel. Then, ascending from the door of the curtained

47 One *braccio mercantile di Modena* is equal to 0.633153 metres according to *Tavole di ragguaglio dei pesi e delle misure già in uso nelle varie provincie del regno col peso metrico decimale approvate con decreto reale 20 maggio 1877*, n. 3836 (Rome: 1877), 441.

48 *Libro delle congregazioni*, fol. 17r.

49 It is possible that the confratelli used the curtain to symbolize the revelation of the truth of Christianity. For an examination of the multiple meanings of the curtain when it appears in Christian art, see Johann Konrad Eberlein, "The Curtain in Raphael's Sistine *Madonna*," *The Art Bulletin* 65.1 (1983): 61–70.

50 *Libro delle congregazioni*, fol. 17r.

51 *Libro delle congregazioni*, fol. 17r.

partition to the altar, there were seven steps, each representing one of the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit. Nine burning lamps on each level illuminated the participants' path toward the altar, so that each advancing step reminded them of the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit, the names of which were inscribed on the corresponding steps.

As the spectator moved toward the altar, his or her eyes would be drawn up to the Eucharist, which was housed inside a tabernacle designed specifically for this event. It was a "black triangle positioned aloft above the altar," which corresponded to the triangular nature of the altar's curtained enclosure, emphasizing the Trinitarian symbolism of the display.⁵² The triangular tabernacle was probably a three-sided pyramid, or tetrahedron, since the chronicle states that a small golden pillar arose from each of its three bottom corners, with arches springing from their capitals, joining them together in a triangle. The tetrahedron was accentuated further with puffs of white cloth, while a golden silk drapery adorned the three arches above it. Lastly, an inscription on the triangle reiterated the Trinitarian meaning of the tabernacle and its embellishments.

Finally, in the centre of the display, at the end of a journey guided by lights, epitaphs, and symbolic imagery, Correggio's *Madonna di San Giorgio* would have been revealed. The seven steps of ascension toward the altar, illuminated by seven groups of nine candelabra and set against a black curtain, drew the eye gradually toward the altarpiece, which was given greater emphasis by four angels positioned above it, each holding an additional burning candle. Similar to the way in which the seven steps, illuminated by eighty-five lights in a darkened oratory, functioned to draw the devotee physically and spiritually closer to the Eucharist, the gestures of Saint John the Baptist and Saint George in the altarpiece—positioned just behind the tabernacle—worked to welcome the viewer into close proximity with the Virgin and Child. Furthermore, once having climbed the steps, and contemplated each of the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit, the viewer was instructed to "behold the Lamb of God," by an inscription (*ECCE AGNUS DEI*) near an image of a lamb that had been placed on the altar.⁵³ Just beyond, he or she would have seen Saint John the Baptist reiterating the message by gesturing toward the Christ Child in Correggio's painting. At the same time, the saint makes direct eye contact in a way that emphatically invites the spectator to transcend, in prayerful devotion, into the celestial realm occupied by the Virgin, Child, and her retinue of saints. By providing a

52 *Libro delle congregazioni*, fol. 17r.

53 *Libro delle congregazioni*, fol. 17r.

physical, yet spiritually edifying journey toward the Body of Christ, which was simultaneously contained in the tabernacle and depicted in the altarpiece as the Christ Child, the brothers' ephemeral architecture and symbolism essentially supplemented and enhanced the visual cues in the painting.

According to the confraternity's chronicle, the brothers designed the imagery of the *Quarant'ore* of 6 November 1575 to exist only for the duration of the ritual. The chronicle records that other devotional spectacles took place in the oratory, often created for individual feast days and torn down shortly after. Starting in 1577, the confraternity of Saint Peter Martyr in Modena held a yearly spectacle that lasted from Christmas Eve until Saint Stephen's Day (24–26 December), in honour of a plenary indulgence issued by Pope Gregory XIII. The confratelli took the celebration of the indulgence very seriously for the first four years, in which they created symbolic demonstrations with increasing complexity. In each instance, the brothers used ephemeral architecture, artwork, and edifying epitaphs, to reach higher levels of innovation in order to engage and delight devotees.

8 Conclusion

For confraternities, art was used to fulfil a wide variety of functions. Altarpieces, by means of iconography, could legitimise a company's foundation legend, link the brothers to powerful intercessors, and place the sodality firmly within the city in which it operated. Other works of art, such as narrative series, processional banners, and small portraits supported the corporate practices and devotional function of the group, not only to members of the confraternity, but to the public as well. The confraternity of Saint Sebastian visually asserted its link to the plague saint from its very foundation, as evidenced by the historiated initial of the company's statutes and the emphatic repetition of his image in multiple altarpieces, paintings, portraits, banners, and sculptures.

The brothers of Saint Peter Martyr, on the other hand, reconsidered their corporate identity in the middle of the 16th century. Indeed, very little is known about how they used art prior to the installation of Correggio's *San Giorgio Altarpiece* on their high altar in about 1530, twelve years prior to being forced to give up their work in the hospital. Their post-Tridentine spectacles, however, demonstrate how the confratelli developed a sophisticated practice of combining their altarpiece with religious symbolism, allegory, and recitation so as to draw the spectator—spiritually and physically—into a deeply devotional state of mind.

The two examples from Modena highlight how the unique corporate identities, histories, and devotional goals of these two early modern confraternities directly influenced the ways in which they used art both inside their exclusive meeting places and when performing extraordinary rituals for the benefit of the public. Other confraternities in Modena and elsewhere may possibly have used art in the same manner or chosen to follow different paths to their devotional and corporate goals—the question remains very much open. Further examination of archival records from other cities, and even from Modena itself, will thus enrich our understanding of the role of art in lay religious organisations and will certainly provide a more nuanced picture of what is a complex and fascinating subject.

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Art as Confraternal Documentation: Homeless Children and the Florentine Misericordia in the Trecento

William R. Levin

1 Confraternal Documents and Confraternal Art

The material patrimonies of European confraternities during the Late Middle Ages, the Renaissance, and beyond have proven fertile ground for researchers of every sort, as the companion essays in this volume demonstrate.¹ Investigations addressing confraternal art and architecture present challenges different from inquiries into areas that rely solely on the archival record. Texts once written—be they notarial and secretarial, theological, legal, instructional and homiletical, musical, or literary—tend to be shelved for frequent consultation, occasional reference, or simple disregard. But paintings and sculptures in various media are by definition objects fashioned to make a visual impact, and more for the messages that they convey than merely for reasons of style and beauty, regardless of their sources of patronage. Such is unquestionably the case for painted wooden panels, frescoes, and manuscript illuminations, and for three-dimensional artworks in stone, metal, ivory, wood, and gesso, that were produced for confraternities during the early modern era. Naturally, written documentation for a work of art—or architecture—can provide vital information about authorship, patronage, ownership, date, expense, placement, and especially purpose, but only if such archival records survive. In the end, however, it is the object itself that is most telling, especially on those occasions when the paperwork for it is ambiguous, incomplete, or even entirely lacking. What is represented, and the way in which it is represented, may disclose what the archival record does not, or does so only partially.

And yet, there are factors impossible to foresee by the persons for whom a piece was created that can impose themselves and impede our own full understanding of it. Whether documented or not, although the meaning and

¹ This article was conceived in celebration of the 100th birthday of Lenore Levin Wolbarsht and is now published honouring her memory. Aspects of this material were presented at the 2018 annual meeting of the Midwest Art History Society convened in Indianapolis.

intention of a work of art might remain both consistent and relevant in regard to the milieu for which it was produced, stylistic preferences are notoriously whimsical, such that a painting or sculpture executed on confraternal commission might be replaced by a new one carrying the same message but displaying a more up-to-date style and perhaps different compositional elements. The earlier piece, rendered superfluous, would then be removed from its original setting, likely relegated to a storage space and there suffer neglect or even outright destruction. Alternatively, ownership of such an outmoded work might be transferred to a private party or to a museum through gift or sale, and its provenance forgotten and consequently lost in the process. A comparable fate, of course, would probably ensue for a confraternal artwork whose sense and function were, for whatever reason, no longer considered pertinent, for one deemed expendable following a rearrangement of its setting, and likewise for one that has been damaged. Architecture, too, is subject to similar vicissitudes and is eminently perishable, if to a somewhat lesser degree than paintings and sculptures, insofar as a building then as now can fall victim to necessary structural alterations, changes in ownership, urban renewal or, again, shifting stylistic preferences that obscure the identity of its original proprietor and its initial purpose.

This article seeks to demonstrate how works of art can stand on their own as documents of confraternal purpose and action in support, and even in lieu, of definitive archival evidence to that effect. It addresses a group of five reliably dated artworks associated with one of Florence's premier charitable foundations, the Compagnia Maggiore di Santa Maria della Misericordia (fig. 21.1). While changes in aesthetic taste and message, and as a result location, have long obscured the original context of and meaning attached to the earliest of these objects, the others remain *in situ* at the former seat of the Misericordia confraternity—now the Museo del Bigallo—on the city's Piazza di San Giovanni, contiguous with the Piazza del Duomo, thus making clear the fact that each held significance for the Misericordia. And although textual documentation does exist contemporaneous with the date of manufacture for all but the second oldest among them, in no case does it spell out the rationale for the image to which it refers, or more specifically for its formal appearance, nor does it connect that particular image to others of the group. Despite these limitations in the written record, all but the latest among these several pieces—the lone narrative tableau in the group—share, in varied form, a single crucial iconographical element that expresses in visual terms what only belated archival notices, aided by that final work of art, establish in regard to what became one of the Florentine Misericordia's chief philanthropic aims, and by extension the public-minded spirit of that organisation: providing support for the city's abandoned children and orphans. Considered together, therefore, the works



FIGURE 21.1 Early headquarters of the Greater Company of Saint Mary of Mercy (loggia, oratory, and residence), now the Museo del Bigallo, Florence. (1321/22 and following).
PHOTO: WILLIAM R. LEVIN.

of art in question allow us to back up what, were we to consult exclusively the documentary record, would appear to be the starting date of the long, evidently continuous period when members of the *Misericordia* began performing that particular good work. Together, too, they emphasise the early importance of this service within the broader charitable mission of the confraternity.

2 The Florentine *Misericordia* in the Trecento: Property, Prestige, and Prosperity

Not much is known of the history of the Greater Confraternity of Saint Mary of Mercy before the middle years of the 14th century. Extant documents written by and for the *Misericordia* itself that detail its affairs commence in 1349; prior to that, communal records offer a general framework only, although they do indicate the confraternity's rapid rise in influence and wealth.² While two

² Though frequently erroneous and differing in their details, standard accounts of the history of the *Misericordia* include Placido Landini, *Istoria dell'oratorio e della Venerabile Arciconfraternita di Santa Maria della Misericordia della città di Firenze* (1779; repr. with notes by Pietro

possibly related but unverifiable origin myths argue for its founding in the 13th century—as were Florence's two other major charitable confraternities, both also dedicated to the Virgin: the Compagnia della Madonna di Orsanmichele and the Compagnia di Santa Maria del Bigallo—a 17th-century transcription of a lost document of 1321/22 recording the Misericordia's purchase of a house facing the baptistery of Florence is the first certain piece of evidence attesting to its existence.³ Its headquarters—or residence—prominently situated in downtown Florence thus established, legal recognition favouring the

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- Pillori, Florence: 1843); Luigi Passerini, *Storia degli stabilimenti di beneficenza e distruzione elementare gratuita della città di Firenze* (Florence: 1853), 440–482, 902–929 (documents Q through S); Celestino Bianchi, *La Compagnia della Misericordia di Firenze: Cenni storici* (Florence: 1855); Giovanni Poggi, Corrado Ricci, and I.B. Supino, “La Compagnia del Bigallo,” *Rivista d'arte* 2 (1904), 189–244, esp. 192–197, 203–213, 225–230; Ugo Morini, *Documenti inediti o poco noti per la storia della Misericordia di Firenze (1240–1525)* (Florence: 1940); Guglielmo François, *La Misericordia di Firenze: Note illustrative* (Florence: 1954); William R. Levin, “Studies in the Imagery of Mercy in Late Medieval Italian Art” (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 1983), 330–350; Foresto Niccolai, *Opere di carità a Firenze: Notizie storiche* (Florence: 1985), 25–48; William R. Levin, “Advertising Charity in the Trecento: The Public Decorations of the Misericordia in Florence,” *Studies in Iconography* 17 (1996), 215–309, esp. 217–219 and accompanying notes; William R. Levin, “‘Lost Children,’ a Working Mother, and the Progress of an Artist at the Florentine Misericordia in the Trecento,” *Publications of the Medieval Association of the Midwest* 6 (1999), 34–84; Phillip Joseph Earenfight, “The Residence and Loggia della Misericordia (Il Bigallo): Art and Architecture of Confraternal Piety, Charity, and Virtue in Late Medieval Florence” (Ph.D. diss., Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, 1999), 36–66, 118–130; William R. Levin, *The Allegory of Mercy at the Misericordia in Florence: Historiography, Context, Iconography, and the Documentation of Confraternal Charity in the Trecento* (Lanham, Md.: 2004), esp. Chap. 6; Cesare Torricelli, *La Misericordia di Firenze: Note storiche*, 4th ed. (Florence: 2014); and William R. Levin, “Death in Florence: The Seventh Work of Mercy and the Early Misericordia,” *Southeastern College Art Conference Review* 16:5 (2015), 570–589.
- 3 Most of the sources listed in the preceding note summarize at least one of the Misericordia's founding legends and refer to its acquisition of property in 1321/22. For both tales and critiques regarding their credibility see Levin, “Studies in the Imagery of Mercy,” 330–333 and accompanying notes; Levin, *The Allegory of Mercy*, 75–76 and accompanying notes; and, correcting a previous misconception, Levin, “Death in Florence,” 578 and accompanying notes. All three sources include earlier references. For the history of Orsanmichele see Passerini, *Storia degli stabilimenti*, 404–439, 896–902 (documents O and P); Saverio La Sorsa, *La Compagnia d'Or San Michele, ovvero una pagina della beneficenza in Toscana nel secolo XIV* (Trani: 1902); Levin, “Studies in the Imagery of Mercy,” 278–299; John Henderson, *Piety and Charity in Late Medieval Florence* (Oxford: 1994); Diane Finiello Zervas (ed.), *Orsanmichele a Firenze/Orsanmichele, Florence*, 2 vols (Modena: 1996); and Diane Finiello Zervas, *Orsanmichele: Documents, 1336–1452/Documenti, 1336–1452* (Modena: 1996). For the history of the Bigallo see Passerini, *Storia degli stabilimenti*, 1–60, 793–816 (documents A through L); Poggi, Ricci, and Supino, “Bigallo,” 189–244; Margherita Sichi, *Un'istituzione di beneficenza fiorentina: Il Bigallo*, (Naples: 1927); François, *La Misericordia di Firenze*; Howard Saalman, *The Bigallo: The Oratory and Residence of the Compagnia del Bigallo e della Misericordia in Florence* (New York: 1969); and Levin, “Studies in the Imagery of Mercy,” 313–330.

Misericordia and other confraternities as public institutions with the right to defend their claims on future testamentary legacies came in 1329. During the following year the confraternity established a register in which to inscribe donations of objects made by testators, which included a self-imposed restriction on their sale. A year after that, a city provision empowered the organisation's captains in matters regarding the administration of bequests, granting the same privilege to the captains of Orsanmichele. Enriched suddenly and significantly through endowments in the wake of the Black Death of 1348, already during that deadly summer the government found it necessary to appoint an outside official to shield the Misericordia's interests and those of other major Florentine sodalities from challenges brought by jealous and disinherited kin of testators carried away by the pandemic. Months later, and further reflecting the organisation's swiftly multiplying resources, the commune essentially replicated a directive issued days earlier to Orsanmichele in rescinding the Misericordia's earlier restriction on alienating inheritances—real estate was named here along with moveable objects, surely including household items of little use to the confraternity now flowing to it in unprecedented and unmanageable quantities—while simultaneously authorizing and encouraging the institution to sell such possessions and distribute the profits to the poor whenever possible. In 1351, as the city began to recover from the plague, the confraternity received in donation a house adjoining the centrally located residence acquired three decades previously; deploying some of its newly begotten wealth, it immediately cleared this parcel of land and set about expanding its footprint and visibility by building an oratory and loggia. Concurrently the city enhanced the authority of the advocate appointed to champion the Misericordia and its large sister foundations. The confraternity continued to prosper throughout the remainder of the 14th century and beyond, substantiated by numerous entries in its record books listing both testamentary contributions and eleemosynary distributions, and reflected in the size of its subsidies to the communal treasury as a faithful contributor to the government's increasingly voracious program of forced loans. Its enviable financial condition also permitted the Misericordia to display its commitment to charitable action through works of art commissioned to adorn its headquarters.

3 Foundlings and Orphans at the Misericordia in the Late 14th Century

Archival records running from 1368 to 1406 uncovered, published, and discussed elsewhere by the present author verify that the Misericordia was one of the few Florentine philanthropic organisations that, amid its various charitable

endeavours, maintained a small refuge for abandoned and orphaned children. More than likely, the confraternity acted in this capacity in cooperation with other Florentine foundations that also looked after children in desperate circumstances.⁴ Specifically, the documents locate this shelter on an upper floor of the Misericordia residence itself, list the utilitarian contents of an adjacent kitchen, and identify by name and salary the youths' successive adult overseers. In addition, those same annals chronicle the purchase of candles for use in baptismal ceremonies and mention an assortment of burial shrouds kept on hand. Extrapolating from other archival documents of the Misericordia from the last third of the Trecento and from what is known generally of hospices for children in that era, it is clear that the confraternity lodged, fed, and clothed the parentless children under its supervision, cared for them when they were ill, undoubtedly engaged wet-nurses for the infants among them, properly buried those innocents who did not survive, and sought to restore those who did survive to their parents or else find new homes for them.⁵

Drawing from this set of related undertakings, the latter action in particular was proclaimed publicly (and the others implied) in a large fresco of 1386 by local artists Ambrogio di Baldese and Niccolò di Pietro Gerini once prominently displayed on the façade of the Misericordia residence opposite the baptistery of Florence just across the street and, since 1777, on view in damaged condition inside the Bigallo Museum, which occupies the former Misericordia premises (fig. 21.2).⁶ Surviving archival notations tersely record payment for the fresco

4 On those other Florentine institutions providing services for children during the Trecento—notably the Ospedale di San Gallo, the Ospedale di Santa Maria della Scala, and Orsanmichele—and on the Misericordia's proposed collaboration with them see Passerini, *Storia degli stabilimenti*, 659–675 (San Gallo), 675–685 (Scala), 404–439 (Orsanmichele; see further the previous note); Levin, “Studies in the Imagery of Mercy,” 221–222, 289, 292, 380–381 nn. 114 and 123, 409–410 nn. 289–290 and 296–297 (with earlier references); Levin, “Advertising Charity,” 228, 238, 240–242, 246–247, 275, 284–285 nn. 31–32, 291 n. 66, 294 n. 73 (with earlier references); and Levin, “Lost Children,” 42, 68 n. 28. In general, see also Nicholas Terpstra, *Abandoned Children of the Italian Renaissance: Orphan Care in Florence and Bologna* (Baltimore: 2005).

5 Levin, “Lost Children,” 37–40, 46–55, accompanying notes, and 83–84 (documents 1–5). See also Levin, *The Allegory of Mercy*, 67–69, 71–73, 78, and accompanying notes; and Levin, “Death in Florence,” 579, 588 n. 47.

6 Hanna Kiel, *Il Museo del Bigallo a Firenze* (Milan: 1977), 120–121 and plates 42–48 (cat. no. 8); Levin, “Advertising Charity,” 221–233, 275, accompanying notes, and figs 3–4; Levin, “Lost Children,” 40–46, accompanying notes, and figs 2–3; Earenfight, “The Residence and Loggia,” Chap. 7 and figs 135–138; Levin, *The Allegory of Mercy*, 34, 67–69, 71–73, 78, accompanying notes, and fig. 10; and George R. Bent, *Public Painting and Visual Culture in Early Republican Florence* (New York: 2016), 93–96, accompanying notes, pl. 12, and fig. 35. All sources named include earlier references.



FIGURE 21.2 Ambrogio di Baldese and Niccolò di Pietro Gerini, *The Consignment of Abandoned Children and Orphans to Natural and Adoptive Mothers*. (1386) Florence, Museo del Bigallo.

PHOTO: MINISTERO PER I BENI E LE ATTIVITÀ CULTURALI,
SOPRINTENDENZA SPECIALE PER IL PATRIMONIO STORICO,
ARTISTICO ED ETNOANTROPOLOGICO E PER IL POLO MUSEALE
DELLA CITTÀ DI FIRENZE, GABINETTO FOTOGRAFICO.

as well as its restoration six years later. In that painting, the latest among the group of artworks explored in this essay, a pair of members of the Misericordia stand within the loggia completed a quarter-century earlier wearing the red mantles donned by brethren during the Trecento while engaged in official confraternity business, including the performance of acts of charity. From there the two men transfer otherwise defenceless children in their custody to the women gathered outside who will care for them, be they the youths' birth mothers or substitutes for them. This practice is first mentioned in late-18th-century guidebooks of Florence; there are no contemporaneous written sources corroborating it.⁷ Yet, it is inconceivable that the event portrayed in this very public fresco never occurred in the era when the painting was created. *The Consignment of Abandoned Children and Orphans to Natural and Adoptive Mothers* exists, therefore, as one more document testifying to the confraternity's efforts on behalf of homeless children, a visual confirmation of its deep involvement in their lives during the later Trecento, as revealed in the varied series of archival records from that period. By 1408 the Misericordia's concern for children in general extended to its self-appointed task to maintain, for the first time in Florentine history, a complete and orderly register containing the

7 On the lack of early documentation supporting what the fresco illustrates and the far later reports of this activity on a periodic basis see Levin, "Advertising Charity," 242, 295 n. 80; and Levin, "Lost Children," 42, 68 n. 29.

names of all children, including those of the confraternity's youthful charges, baptised in the Baptistery of San Giovanni across the street from its offices.⁸

The Baldese-Gerini fresco of 1386 retained its documentary validity during the ensuing centuries. Additional archival notices from the second quarter of the Quattrocento provide evidence that the Misericordia brethren continued to run a hospice for juveniles inside their headquarters following the 1425 merger of their association with the badly mismanaged Bigallo confraternity, a service that may have passed fully if informally to the latter organisation after dissolution of that unhappy union in 1489. And even subsequent to the Misericordia's definitive abandonment of its premises to the Bigallo during the 1520s following thirty-five years more of shared ownership, when the confraternity relocated to temporary quarters nearby, the meaning and significance of the fresco remained intact, for in 1541 the Bigallo, by then ensconced in the Misericordia's former seat as its sole proprietor, was transformed into a supervisory body as the government magistracy that exercised a commanding role over the administration of all public charity in Florence, which included the task of looking after dispossessed children.⁹

4 Artistic Intimations of the Misericordia's Prior Engagement with Homeless Youths

The Baldese-Gerini tableau is, as noted, the last of five works of art addressed here—and the only narrative one—furnishing tangible evidence of the

8 As early as the Trecento a significant, even urgent, relationship probably existed between the Misericordia and the baptistery stemming from the confraternity's work with foundlings and orphans—as proposed below in regard to Tino di Camaino's Charity figure of c.1321–23—for with the incidence of infant mortality rampant during the early modern era, the confraternity surely found it necessary to ensure that all children in its care were baptised as soon as possible. On the Misericordia's register and the importance of baptism to the confraternity see Levin, "Studies in the Imagery of Mercy," 343, 427–428 n. 412 (with earlier references); Levin, "Advertising Charity," 218, 279 n. 12 (with earlier references); Levin, "Lost Children," 37–39, 63–65 nn. 12–13 and 17–19 (with earlier references); and William R. Levin, "'Tanto goffe e mal fatte [...] dette figure si facessino [...] belle': The Trecento Overdoor Sculptures for the Baptistery in Florence and Their Cinquecento Replacements," *Studies in Iconography* 26 (2005), 229.

9 Passerini, *Storia degli stabilimenti*, 22, 27–60, 802–816 (documents F through L); Saalman, *The Bigallo*, 25, 25 n. 52, 49–50 (document 9i); Levin, "Advertising Charity," 283–284 n. 28, 285–86 n. 39 (with earlier references); Levin, "Lost Children," 48, 73 n. 48 (with earlier references); Nicholas Terpstra, "Competing Visions of the State and Social Welfare: The Medici Dukes, the Bigallo Magistrates, and Local Hospitals in Sixteenth-Century Tuscany," *Renaissance Quarterly* 54:4, Part 2 (2001), 1319–1355; Levin, *The Allegory of Mercy*, 68–69, 148 n. 4 (with earlier references); and Terpstra, *Abandoned Children*, *passim*.

Misericordia's role in assisting the large numbers of foundlings and orphans that beset Florence during the Trecento. Each of the others predates not only the fresco of 1386 advertising that good work but also the succession of confraternity documents commencing in 1368 that attest to it. First among these artworks chronologically is Tino di Camaino's life-size marble sculpture of the virtue Charity with two nurslings, c.1321–23, now in the Museo Bardini in Florence (fig. 21.3). With near certainty, this striking figure—perhaps the earliest in a long line of personifications in art of Charity as a breast-feeding mother—was commissioned by the city's Calimala (wool merchants') guild as one of the Three Theological Virtues formerly positioned atop the south portal of the Florentine baptistery directly opposite the headquarters of the Misericordia, which just then was settling into that location.¹⁰ Documentation concerning this ensemble is, however, far from clear, the original guild records having disappeared, and hence our reliance once again, as in the case of the Misericordia's concurrent purchase of its residence, on 17th-century transcriptions of a pair of Calimala deliberations from 1321 and 1322. Evidently part of a then-evolving iconographical program embracing all three entrances to the baptistery, the first of these texts mentions an unspecified but plural number of personified virtue figures then being prepared for a likewise unstipulated portal. The second text expresses the desire that Tino, from Siena, be introduced to execute unnamed “works” for the building. Scholars agree, based on stylistic evidence, that all surviving elements—mostly fragments—of the 14th-century program for the overdoors of the baptistery's three entrances were indeed carved by Tino, who left Florence in 1323. Close scrutiny of a pair of early paintings (datable to c.1370–80 and 1416–17) along with an analysis of documents and other literary materials from the 16th century clarify their alignment above the respective portals of the building prior to their physical deterioration, the decision to further alter the baptistery's iconographical program, and the replacement of those early sculptures by the better-known and well-preserved Renaissance-era figural triads displaying a preferred, thoroughly up-to-date style. Subsequently, the remnants of Tino's sculptures went unrecorded until the 19th century, when all but the Bardini Charity

10 The Misericordia purchased property and established its seat opposite the baptistery in 1321/22, as recorded in virtually all histories of the confraternity (see notes 2 and 3 above). For Tino's sculpture of c.1321–23 and its original placement see Enrica Neri Lusanna in Enrica Neri Lusanna and Lucia Faedo, *Il Museo Bardini a Firenze*, vol. 2, *Le Sculture* (Milan: 1986), 225–227 (cat. no. 126); William R. Levin, “The Iconography of Charity *Redux*: The Origins of Two Little-Known Symbols for *Amor proximi* in Fifteenth-Century Italian Art,” *Fifteenth-Century Studies* 20 (1993), 152 n. 39 (with earlier references); Levin, “Advertising Charity,” 251, 299 n. 102 (with earlier references); and Levin, “Tanto goffe,” 205–242, esp. 226–231, and accompanying notes (with earlier references).



FIGURE 21.3 Tino di Camaino, *Charity Personified* (from the Florentine Baptistry). (c.1321–23) Florence, Museo Bardini.
PHOTO: ALINARI/ART RESOURCE, NEW YORK.

passed to the newly established Museo dell'Opera del Duomo in Florence, including what remains of a second Charity figure rejected here, and by some earlier scholars, as part of the Trecento program.¹¹ But for approximately two centuries—until removal early in the Cinquecento along with her companions, Faith and Hope—the Bardini Charity suckling two infants gazed unswervingly and approvingly at the Misericordia's offices from her original perch above the south door of the baptistery, suggesting a link between that building and the confraternity that began nearly a century before the Misericordia assumed the obligation, in 1408, to maintain the city's baptismal register.¹² Reinforcing that connection, in the 1350s Tino's Charity and her sisters were complemented by Alberto Arnoldi's reliefs of the Four Cardinal Virtues filling the arch spandrels of the newly constructed loggia of the confraternity adjoining its oratory and residence.¹³ Other iconographical choices were available to Tino for his sculpture of Charity, a figure intended to give form to the term that signifies the all-embracing concept of Christian love.¹⁴ Assuredly, however, and with the support of a long and then-still-developing exegetical tradition, the decision was made to represent Charity as a nursing mother to express in the clearest way possible not only one aspect of that larger notion—*Amor proximi*, love of neighbour—as the total and selfless devotion of one person for another in general, but here specifically to mark the efforts of the nearby confraternity on behalf of parentless youths.¹⁵

Amor proximi, the merciful neighbourly love that is charity in its human form as manifested in righteous actions toward others, was understood as the prerequisite of *Amor Dei*, the love of God, a higher charity that finds its reward in *Misericordia Domini*, the mercy of the Lord, which is God's redemptive love for humankind, his gift to those persons who merit it especially through their performance of good works.¹⁶ In the *Allegory of Mercy*, an undocumented

11 On the controversy over Tino's two Charity figures (the second one carries a flaming double cornucopia) see Levin, "The Iconography of Charity *Redux*," 152 n. 39; Levin, "Advertising Charity," 299 n. 102; and esp. Levin, "Tanto goffe," 226–229 and accompanying notes. All three sources include earlier references.

12 See the references in note 8 above.

13 Levin, "Advertising Charity," 251, 263, 300 n. 103.

14 Levin, "The Iconography of Charity *Redux*," *passim*; and Levin, *The Allegory of Mercy*, 52, 133–134 n. 2 (with earlier references).

15 For Charity as a nursing mother and its appropriateness to the Misericordia see the discussions, exegetical and literary citations, and earlier references in Levin, "Studies in the Imagery of Mercy," 645–710 and accompanying notes; Levin, *The Allegory of Mercy*, 52–58, 83, and accompanying notes; and Levin, "Tanto goffe," 226–231, 239–240 n. 51.

16 For biblical and exegetical quotations and references to other scholarly literature on the theology of love see Levin, "Studies in the Imagery of Mercy," 631–653 and accompanying

fresco painted in 1342 according to the dedicatory inscription at its base, and executed by an unknown artist in the circle of local master Bernardo Daddi on a wall of the Bigallo Museum contiguous with that now supporting *The Consignment of Abandoned Children and Orphans*, a monumental personification of Mercy presides over the city and citizenry of Florence, represented below and at her sides, respectively, in a graphically literal way (fig. 21.4).¹⁷ Her mantle—conspicuously red, the colour of charity, as reflected in the vestments donned by the Misericordia brethren depicted in the Baldese-Gerini fresco of 1386—is hemmed by an orphrey adorned with miniature representations of the Six Corporal Works of Mercy enjoined by Christ Himself (Matt. 25:31–46, esp. verses 35–36) along with the frequently added seventh work, burial of the dead.¹⁸ As such, this figure of Mercy was intended to inspire the Misericordia confraternity—original occupant of the Bigallo Museum—that commissioned and looked to the fresco on a wall of its residence as its institutional centrepiece, reminding and motivating its members to provide the organisation's broad range of philanthropic services confirmed by the archival record, including the guardianship of foundlings and orphans. Besides enhancing the present quality of life for all Florentines, for the Misericordia brethren in particular such actions were the paving stones of their pathway to eternal life in Heaven (Matt. 25:40). In time, of course, the *Allegory of*

notes; Levin, "The Iconography of Charity *Redux*," 119–167, esp. 121–123, 144–145 nn. 7 and 11; and Levin, *The Allegory of Mercy*, *passim*, esp. 24–25, 43–50, 53–58, 117 n. 14, 131–132 n. 56, 134–135 nn. 3–9, 136 n. 11, 141 n. 27.

- 17 The fullest discussions of the *Allegory of Mercy* include Passerini, *Storia degli stabilimenti*, 450–453; Richard Offner, *A Critical and Historical Corpus of Florentine Painting*, Sec. 3, vol. 8, *The Fourteenth Century: Workshop of Bernardo Daddi* (New York: 1958), 159–163 and plates 43, 43a–b (with earlier references); Kiel, *Museo del Bigallo*, 118–119 and plates 17–22 (cat. no. 3, with earlier references); Levin, "Studies in the Imagery of Mercy," Chap. 1 and *passim*; Earenfight, "The Residence and Loggia," Chap. 4; Levin, *The Allegory of Mercy*; Phillip Earenfight, "Catechism and *Confraternitas* on the Piazza San Giovanni: How the Misericordia Used Image and Text to Instruct its Members in Christian Theology," *Journal of Religious History* 28:1 (February 2004), 64–86; Francesco Botana, *The Works of Mercy in Italian Medieval Art (c.1050–c.1400)* (Turnhout: 2011), 166–184; Phillip Earenfight, "Civitas Florenti[a]e: The New Jerusalem and the *Allegory of Divine Misericordia*," in *A Scarlet Renaissance: Essays in Honor of Sarah Blake McHam*, (ed.) Arnold Victor Coonin (New York: 2013), 131–160; Levin, "Death in Florence"; and Bent, *Public Painting*, 88–93. All of these sources reproduce the fresco.
- 18 For various exegetical and literary citations and earlier references concerning red as the colour of charity see Levin, "The Iconography of Charity *Redux*," 124–132, 137–141, esp. 128–129, 132, 137, and accompanying notes; Levin, *The Allegory of Mercy*, 34, 120–121 n. 8; and Levin, "Death in Florence," 573, 583 n. 14. On the seventh work of mercy see Levin, "Studies in the Imagery of Mercy," 29–36 and accompanying notes; Levin, *The Allegory of Mercy*, 74–79 and accompanying notes; and Levin, "Death in Florence."



FIGURE 21.4 Circle of Bernardo Daddi, *Allegory of Mercy*. (1342) Florence, Museo del Bigallo.
PHOTO: ALINARI/ART RESOURCE, NEW YORK.

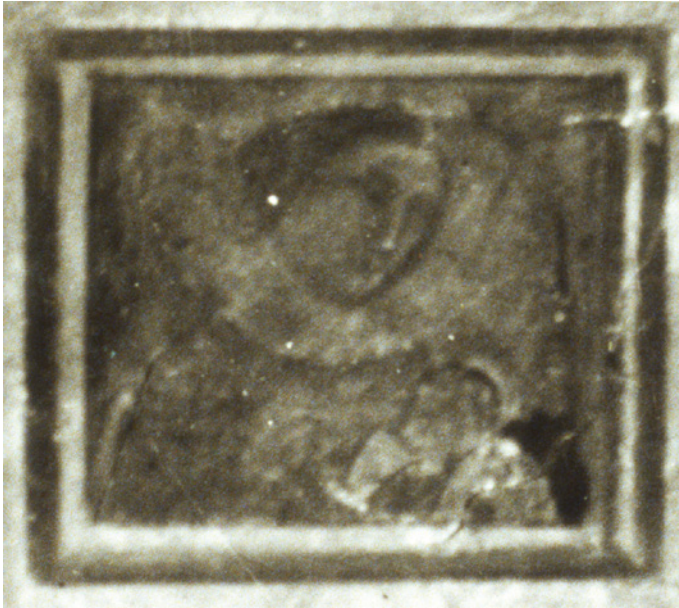


FIGURE 21.5 Circle of Bernardo Daddi, Detail from the border of *Allegory of Mercy*. (1342) Florence, Museo del Bigallo.
PHOTO: ALINARI/ART RESOURCE, NEW YORK.

Mercy filled a similar role for the influential Bigallo confraternity, continually prompting its members to carry out their own philanthropic mandate, initially focused on supporting hospitals for the infirm and hospices for pilgrims and wayfarers, but eventually, following unification with the Misericordia in 1425 and climaxing in the government decree of the mid-16th century that turned the Bigallo into a powerful public entity, centred on the care of homeless children as well.¹⁹

The nursing-mother iconography for Charity exhibited by Tino di Camaino's baptismal sculpture recurs twenty years later in the *Allegory of Mercy* as one of a series of small vignettes depicting personified virtues within the decorative border of the fresco (fig. 21.5). But here Charity suckles a single infant, possibly the earliest extant instance of this variant of the type.²⁰ With this modification, and again supported by an extensive theological line of reasoning, here and elsewhere the personified Charity became interchangeable with the increasingly popular image of the nursing Madonna, mother of the merciful God in his worldly form and, as a result, protector and *mediatrix* before Him,

¹⁹ See the references in notes 3 and 9 above.

²⁰ Levin, "Studies in the Imagery of Mercy," 704–706; and Levin, *The Allegory of Mercy*, 52–58, 83, and accompanying notes.

and by extension his Father, on behalf of supplicants invoking her name. Indeed, Mary's roles as defender of and intercessor for humankind, and then as purveyor of God's mercy, were integrated concepts fundamental to medieval Christianity, complementing Christ's inclination to be merciful to those persons who deserved it because, as a mortal himself who had nursed at his mother's breast, He regarded virtuous actions on their part as atonement for their inevitable and understandable human failings.²¹ In the particular context of the Misericordia, Mary, as the confraternity's patroness, was champion of and advocate for its members. But equally important, as divine benefactor of the institution, she was also the surrogate parent and guardian of Florentine foundlings and orphans entrusted to its care. Appearing within the margin of the confraternity's cornerstone artwork, one might even interpret this detail narratively, as representing an eighth work of mercy—care for defenceless minors—alongside the customary seven illustrated in the roundels of the personified Mercy's orphrey.²² In the border of the frescoed *Allegory of Mercy* of 1342, therefore, there can be no doubt that Mary's persona and her relationship with the confraternity's youthful wards underlie the image of Charity breast-feeding a solitary child. Seldom noted and small as it is, this detail nevertheless joins Tino's baptistery sculpture as artistic testimony of the Misericordia's support for the city's parentless children despite the lack of written proof at that early date.

The tiny image of Charity in the *Allegory's* border looks ahead to Alberto Arnoldi's lunette relief of 1361 over the entrance to the confraternity's oratory, which once faced Tino's Charity on the baptistery across the street (fig. 21.6).²³

21 On Mary's roles as protector, *mediatrix*, and conduit of God's mercy see Levin, "Studies in the Imagery of Mercy," Chaps 4–6; Levin, "Advertising Charity," 247–274, esp. 271–274 and accompanying notes (with relevant biblical passages indicated and earlier references); and Levin, *The Allegory of Mercy*, 21, 34, 36, 53–57, 65, 123 n. 17 (with earlier references), 135–136 nn. 10–11. More specifically in regard to Mary's power of intercession and the meaning attached to the Virgin's milk and breasts, see the discussions, exegetical and literary citations, and earlier references in Levin, "Studies in the Imagery of Mercy," 546–590, 606–631, 789–812, 842–862, and accompanying notes; Levin, "The Iconography of Charity *Redux*," 131, 153–154 n. 45; Levin, "Advertising Charity," 296 n. 83; and Levin, *The Allegory of Mercy*, 53–57, 83, 136–137 nn. 11–13.

22 For this proposal see Levin, "Studies in the Imagery of Mercy," 787 n. 280; and Levin, *The Allegory of Mercy*, 137–138 n. 14. This notion of an eighth work of mercy has been embraced and insightfully expanded to describe one of Domenico di Bartolo's frescoes of 1442–43 in the Pellegrinaio (sick ward) of the Ospedale di Santa Maria della Scala in Siena in Diana Bullen Presciutti, *Visual Cultures of Foundling Care in Renaissance Italy* (Farnham, UK: 2015), 51–60 and pl. 4.

23 Arnoldi's relief is reproduced and at least mentioned in many of the sources touching on the artistic patrimonies of the Misericordia and Bigallo confraternities, as for example Kiel, *Museo del Bigallo*, 4 and pl. VII.



FIGURE 21.6 Alberto Arnoldi, *Madonna and Child* (relief). (1361). Florence, Museo del Bigallo.

PHOTO: WILLIAM R. LEVIN.

Constituting a third piece of visual evidence predating archival records that relate to the Misericordia's actions favouring needy juveniles, the subject of this relief is described in a confraternity deliberation recording payment to the sculptor, who was probably of North Italian origin, as "Our Lady with her blessed Son at her neck." While even today the Italian expression *al collo*, "at [her] neck," is synonymous in this context with *in braccia*, "in [her] arms," the wording of the document and Arnoldi's literal translation of it into stone are no doubt imbued with deeper meaning. As the Christ Child rests his right forearm against Mary's neck, He slips his hand inside the upper edge of her garment. This is one of several related gestures not uncommon in early modern sacred art, each of which is clearly a prelude to the Infant's feeding at his mother's breast.²⁴ Reprising the iconographical equation that informs the *Allegory of*

24 For the various gestures implying the nursing Madonna see Dorothy C. Shorr, *The Christ Child in Devotional Images in Italy during the XIV Century* (New York: 1954), 140–147 (types 21 and 22), 186–189 (type 32).

Mercy's border detail, the half-length Madonna here must be understood not merely as an homage to the confraternity patroness but as a personification of the virtue Charity construed as *Amor proximi*, and also as an unambiguous reference to the Misericordia's work with homeless children. The Virgin's loving attitude toward Jesus here, half-smiling and inclining her head toward her Son as He playfully grasps the last finger of her right hand, surely sent a clear and reassuring signal to all Florentines, perhaps especially to parents constrained by difficult circumstances beyond their control to abandon their offspring to the Misericordia, that the same tender care and nourishment as that given by Mary to her Child would be afforded to unwanted (and orphaned) children taken into the custody of the confraternity. In addition, Arnoldi's relief, like Tino's sculpture and the frescoed *Allegory* detail, may also allude more specifically to a situation mentioned earlier as pertinent to this aspect of the confraternity's philanthropic mission, one that in fact is nowhere substantiated with certainty in the Misericordia's 14th-century documentary record but that—unavoidably—is implicit nonetheless: the organisation's employment of wet-nurses, without whose services the infants in its care would have perished.²⁵

Over a five-year period beginning in 1359, Alberto Arnoldi carved another work for the Misericordia, this one three-dimensional, embodying the confraternity's guardianship over helpless children. In this case a protracted sequence of archival documents details the conception and progress toward completion of an elaborate altarpiece for the confraternity's newly erected oratory; it comprises both sculptures and paintings, including as its centrepiece a life-size standing Madonna and Child (fig. 21.7). For this fourth manifestation in art of the organisation's involvement in safeguarding the lives of Florentine children divested of both home and family, we have a key document—the third in the series—that records the commission to Arnoldi and calls for a marble statue of “Our Lady with the Son in [her] arm[s] with the act of mercy,” augmented here for the first time by an additional request for a pair of flanking angels. The project for the *Misericordia Altarpiece* was further amplified with the commission in 1363 of a stone pedestal by a certain Master Ambrogio upon which Arnoldi's sculptures were to stand, as well as wall and vault frescoes begun that same year and designed, though not executed, by Nardo di Cione, a leading Florentine painter. The sculpted portions of the ensemble were not

25 Levin, “Studies in the Imagery of Mercy,” 706–710 and accompanying notes (with earlier references); Levin, “Advertising Charity,” 242–247, 275–276, and accompanying notes (with earlier references), wherein the subject of wet-nursing is also discussed at some length; Levin, “Lost Children,” 57; and Levin, *The Allegory of Mercy*, 57–58 and accompanying notes.



FIGURE 21.7 Alberto Arnaldi, *Madonna and Child* (detail in the centre of the *Misericordia Altarpiece*). (1359–64) Florence, Museo del Bigallo. PHOTO: MINISTERO PER I BENI E LE ATTIVITÀ CULTURALI, SOPRINTENDENZA SPECIALE PER IL PATRIMONIO STORICO, ARTISTICO ED ETNOANTROPOLOGICO E PER IL POLO MUSEALE DELLA CITTÀ DI FIRENZE, GABINETTO FOTOGRAFICO.

finished until 1364; today, the three statues remain *in situ* before the innermost (western) wall of the oratory, albeit now set within a wooden framework of the early Cinquecento, while the wall fresco (and likewise its sinopia) originally appearing above and behind the sculptures has been transferred to an adjacent surface within the oratory. (The paintings formerly in the vaults and on the other oratory walls have vanished).²⁶ Scholars have questioned the meaning of the quoted phrase, drawn from the confraternity deliberation containing the various contractual details for Arnoldi's figures that include the process for judging their quality, due to the absence in the finished central group of any overt "act" on the part of either the erect, frontally positioned Mary or the Christ Child seated in profile upon her left arm. Close analysis of the sculpture, however, belies the stiff, hieratic, and psychologically distant impression that at first seems to characterise the two figures. The facial expression of neither figure is forbiddingly cold, and Mary holds her Son as delicately as any mother would hold such a fleshy offspring, who with his right hand reaches to chuck the Virgin's chin. Between them flows a palpable quality of human love.²⁷ Read in this way, an interpretation might be applied to this image reminiscent of those given to Tino's Charity, the border detail in the *Allegory of Mercy*, and Arnoldi's nearby lunette relief: while apparently not a personification of love of neighbour *per se*, this representation of the confraternity patroness and her Son is replete with the tenderness and affection upon which the Misericordia's services toward homeless children depended.²⁸ And yet, perhaps incorporated here, too, is—or was—indeed a figure of Charity as *Amor proximi*, as a mother with a baby at her breast. The Christ Child holds

26 For Arnoldi's sculptures see Kiel, *Museo del Bigallo*, 125–126 and plates 79–83 (cat. nos 31–33); and Levin, "Advertising Charity," 251–256 and accompanying notes. For the pedestal see Kiel, *Museo del Bigallo*, 126–127 and plates 84–86 (cat. no. 34); and Levin, "Advertising Charity," 253–256 and accompanying notes. For the frescoes planned by Nardo see Kiel, *Museo del Bigallo*, 120 and plates 38–41 (cat. nos 6 and 7); Levin, "Advertising Charity," 253–256 and accompanying notes; and most fully William R. Levin, "A Lost Fresco Cycle by Nardo and Jacopo di Cione at the Misericordia in Florence," *Burlington Magazine* 141:1151 (February 1999), 75–80. All sources named include earlier references.

27 For this affective interpretation of the sculpture see Levin, "Advertising Charity," 264–267, 272–274, reversing the view expressed earlier in Levin, "Studies in the Imagery of Mercy," 348–350, 903–906.

28 This reading of Arnoldi's Madonna and Child is given further context and depth in Levin, "Studies in the Imagery of Mercy," 903–906, where it is considered in conjunction with the same sculptor's slightly earlier reliefs on the arch facings of the Misericordia's oratory loggia—especially the Man of Sorrows at the apex of the eastern arch—and yet greater meaning when the contemporaneous frescoed Christ in Judgement conceived by Nardo di Cione and formerly looming above the sculpture is taken into account, for which see Levin, "Advertising Charity," 247–274, 276, esp. 272–274; and Levin, "Lost Children," 57.

in his left hand an orb surmounted by a small Cross, traditional symbol of his universal authority, which the Madonna's right hand helps to support. Their hands come together precisely at Mary's left breast. Is it possible that the regal sphere gripped by both was originally conceived as the breast itself, and that at some undocumented point in the past that appendage was restyled as an orb, transformed as such through re-cutting and by fastening to it the Cross, which in fact appears to be of a separate piece of marble?²⁹ If so, like the three works of art featuring a nursing child discussed previously, Arnoldi's freestanding Madonna and Child would also allude to the hired wet-nurses who played an important role in the confraternity's calling on behalf of its most vulnerable dependants. Be that as it may, the cascade of written records corroborating the Misericordia confraternity's concern for the welfare of foundlings and orphans commences with the year 1368, a mere quadrennium after Arnoldi completed his assignment for the *Misericordia Altarpiece*. And along with the other artworks presented here that predate those archival notices, its message would have remained valid when the Bigallo confraternity replaced the Misericordia—possibly as early as 1489, and certainly from 1541—in carrying out that ministry.

5 Conclusion

Documentation in written form is, of course, what researchers in every field, including the history of confraternities and the history of art, desire to find in the course of their work. Confraternal files can reveal the former presence of now-lost paintings, sculptures, and other objects of artistic merit belonging to such institutions. Illustrating this are a pair of contracts that now furnish the sole remaining evidence for a fresco cycle recounting the life of the Virgin Mary complemented by half-figures of saints that once adorned the side walls and two vaults, respectively, of the Florentine Misericordia's oratory and loggia, parts of the aforementioned project devised by Nardo di Cione and initiated in 1363 but, upon Nardo's death, completed only in 1370 by his younger brother

29 See the photographic detail of the sculpture in Kiel, *Museo del Bigallo*, pl. 81. Such a reading might help to justify a common, older interpretation of a phrase in the Misericordia deliberation recording the commission for this Madonna "with the act of mercy," that Arnoldi's sculpture be as "beautiful as the one in Pisa," which has been understood as a reference to Andrea Pisano's half-length nursing Madonna in the Museo Nazionale di San Matteo, Pisa. See Kiel, *Museo del Bigallo*, 125–126 (cat. nos 31–33, with earlier references); Levin, "Studies in the Imagery of Mercy," 349; and Levin, "Advertising Charity," 264, 305–306 n. 132 (with earlier references).

Jacopo.³⁰ Alternatively, archival records pertaining to confraternal works of art still in existence can expand with certainty our knowledge about the professional careers and stylistic development of individual artists, allowing us to pinpoint who executed a particular artwork and when for this or that foundation, where stylistic analysis alone, in lieu of such records, would yield only approximate clues and educated guesses as to authorship and date. In turn, information of this sort, when available, may result in credible attributions for other, unrelated works of art lacking archival indications, be they associated with that same institution or not. A case in point are the sculptures of Alberto Arnoldi, the definition of whose full surviving body of work depends entirely on his two documented images of the Madonna and Child for the Florentine Misericordia examined in this article.³¹ Occasionally confraternal annals can offer insight even into the personal lives of artists. Ambrogio di Baldese, for example, is mentioned along with his mother in a host of Misericordia deliberations and notations over many years for a reason far different from that for the two archival entries noted earlier specifically addressing his fresco of 1386.³² In addition, in regard to sodalities such as the Misericordia, for which the performance of works of mercy played a significant role, written accounts of their philanthropic activities—the purchase and distribution of food and clothing, for instance, or visitations by members to bedridden or incarcerated persons—bring to life on an eminently human scale and in a practical manner the often arcane, conceptually high-minded treatises on charity written mainly by clerics living somewhat, or considerably, removed from the harsh and uncertain realities experienced by most persons in early modern Italy and elsewhere.

Especially when written records are lacking, however, or when they exist but fail to provide sufficient information, works of art executed for confraternities can possess extraordinary documentary value. The group of five paintings and sculptures considered in this article suggest what we can learn from them, both as objects in themselves and when weighed in conjunction with

30 For the missing Marian frescoes and vault paintings by these two brothers see Levin, "A Lost Fresco Cycle," 75–80.

31 For Arnoldi's *oeuvre*, including the reliefs mentioned earlier in the text and in note 28 above, see Gert Kreytenberg, "Alberto Arnoldi e i rilievi della Loggia del Bigallo a Firenze," *Prospettiva* 11 (October 1977), 27–33; John Pope-Hennessy, *Italian Gothic Sculpture*, 3rd edition (New York: 1985), 25, 196–197, 279; and Anita Fiderer Moskowitz, *Italian Gothic Sculpture c.1250–c.1400* (Cambridge, U.K.: 2001), 153–156. All three sources include earlier references.

32 See Levin, "Lost Children," esp. 46–53 and accompanying notes for the most relevant documents; and Levin, *The Allegory of Mercy*, 67.

textual sources. The five pieces do have certain things in common, in both positive and negative senses. All but Tino di Camaino's Charity sculpture of c.1321–23 were, and remain today, physically connected to the venue for which they were created, the 14th-century seat of the Florentine Misericordia, and even Tino's figure can be linked to that confraternity's headquarters insofar as almost certainly it originally stood atop the south door of the city's baptistery, facing the organisation's offices directly across the street. Thanks to testimony supplied by the archival record, the dates of all but the border detail representing Charity in the *Allegory of Mercy* inside the Misericordia's residence are assured, and in that lone instance the year 1342 is included in the inscription painted at the base of the fresco, revealing its date of execution. Yet, in each case the written record relevant to the work is silent as to the reason for which it was commissioned, and also regarding why the finished item appears as it does. Similarly, the documents do not indicate any connection between one piece and another. But both Charity figures, by Tino and in the *Allegory*, present that virtue as a breast-feeding mother, signifying *Amor proximi*. A nursing infant also characterises Alberto Arnoldi's Madonna and Child relief of 1361 in the lunette above the entrance to the Misericordia's oratory and, very possibly, too, his freestanding Madonna and Child as it first appeared at the centre of the *Misericordia Altarpiece* of 1359–64 inside the oratory. While this motif is absent from *The Consignment of Abandoned Children and Orphans to Natural and Adoptive Mothers*, the detached fresco fragment of 1386 by Ambrogio di Baldese and Niccolò di Pietro Gerini formerly on the façade of the confraternity's residence, this painting—the latest artwork at issue here and the only narrative—joins the four earlier pieces in referring generally to a significant aspect of the Misericordia's multifaceted beneficent vocation, the care of parentless children, and even to specific phases within that undertaking, respectively: engaging wet-nurses to feed the babies and, in the case of the Baldese-Gerini tableau, entrusting youths to women willing to accept them into their homes. All works of art other than this final one predate archival confirmation of the confraternity's efforts in aid of children.

The Misericordia of Florence is somewhat unusual in two ways germane to the present discussion on confraternal art. While the public concerns of the association changed with renewed independence following separation from the Bigallo confraternity in 1489—subsequently the focus was upon providing medical care and seeing to the burial of indigents—among confraternities in Italy and elsewhere, especially those of comparable age, the Misericordia's extant and identifiable artistic patrimony, and the portion of that patrimony that has stayed together, is exceptional, beginning with what survives from the

Trecento and continuing with the considerable number of objects added to it in later centuries.³³ And correspondingly, the confraternity's preserved archival records, like those of the Florentine government and certain other local foundations, are extensive. But as for its artistic assets, so for its documentary resources, what remains materially of the Misericordia from the time prior to the middle years of the 14th century is in reality quite limited, leaving us to piece together, as best we can, aspects of its early history, including its many charitable activities, based in large part on what we know with assurance only from what followed. The written record makes clear that the Misericordia was providing shelter and substance to foundlings and orphans by 1368. That it was doing so both earlier and continuously, however—at least as far back as c.1321–23—can be safely deduced from the select group of artworks reviewed in this study, all with traceable histories.³⁴

While many works of art commissioned by and for confraternities conform in their subject matters and cast of characters to, and therefore may be indistinguishable from, standard artworks such as church altarpieces intended for non-confraternal destinations, others can potentially be just as informative—possess the same documentary value—as those executed for the Misericordia and examined in this article and may cast light on the motivations, beliefs, and

33 On the altered emphasis of the Misericordia's philanthropy after 1489 see Passerini, *Storia degli stabilimenti*, 467–481; Levin, "Studies in the Imagery of Mercy," 345–346; Levin, *The Allegory of Mercy*, 73–77 and accompanying notes (with earlier references); and Levin, "Death in Florence," 576–577, 580, and accompanying notes (with earlier references). While some of the Misericordia's artworks later in date than those evaluated in this essay are on view in the Museo del Bigallo—see Kiel, *Museo del Bigallo*; and William R. Levin, "Confraternal Self-Imaging in Marian Art at the Museo del Bigallo in Florence," *Confraternitas* 10:2 (1999), 3–14—others are exhibited in the Museo della Misericordia, opened in January 2016 in another building on the Piazza del Duomo that has served as the confraternity's headquarters since 1576. Among the latter objects, archival holdings, paintings, and sculptures are catalogued in Foresto Niccolai, Monica Bietti Favi, and Giancarlo Gentilini, *La Misericordia di Firenze: Archivio e raccolta d'arte* (Florence: 1981). For other categories of items in the collection see Monica Bietti Favi, Chiara D'Afflito, Giancarlo Gentilini, and Foresto Niccolai, *La Misericordia di Firenze*, vol. 2, *Archivio e arredi* (Florence: 1982).

34 There exists yet another work of art in the Bigallo Museum along with two others dependent upon it located elsewhere, all predating the series of archival notations beginning in 1368, that point to the same conclusion as the five pieces discussed in this article. The evidence in each case is, however, strictly internal insofar as the whereabouts and histories of these three items can be traced with certainty only to the first half of the 19th century in two cases and the mid-20th century in the third. See William R. Levin, "The Bigallo Triptych: A Document of Confraternal Charity in Fourteenth-Century Florence," *Confraternitas* 29.1 (2018), 55–101.

practices of their sponsoring foundations. In such matters, however, certainty relies, by necessity, on secure knowledge of the provenance of such objects aided, when available, as it was here, by written documentation of various sorts sufficient to lead to credible conclusions.

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